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THE WORKS OF

RUDYARD KIPLING

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VOL. I

TRAFFICS AND DISCOVERIES

BY

RUDYARD KIPLING

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

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CONTENTS

THE CAPTIVE

FROM THE MASJID-AL-AQSA OF SAYYID AHMED (WAHABI)

Not with an outcry to Allah nor any complaining
He answered his name at the muster and stood to the chaining.
When the twin anklets were nipped on the leg-bars that held them,
He brotherly greeted the armourers stooping to weld them
Ere the sad dust of the marshalled feet of the chain-gang swallowed him,
Observing him nobly at ease, I alighted and followed him.
Thus we had speech by the way, but not touching his sorrow—
Rather his red Yesterday and his regal To-morrow,
Wherein he statelily moved to the clink of his chains unregarded,
Nowise abashed but contented to drink of the potion awarded.
Saluting aloofly his Fate, he made swift with his story;
And the words of his mouth were as slaves spreading carpets of glory
Embroidered with names of the Djinns — a miraculous weaving—
But the cool and perspicuous eye overbore unbelieving.
So I submitted myself to the limits of rapture—
Bound by this man we had bound, amid captives his capture—
Till he returned me to earth and the visions departed;
But on him be the Peace and the Blessing: for he was great-hearted!

THE CAPTIVE

'He that believeth shall not make haste.'—*Isaiah.*

THE guard-boat lay across the mouth of the bathing-pool, her crew idly spanking the water with the flat of their oars. A red-coated militiaman, rifle in hand, sat at the bows, and a petty officer at the stern. Between the snow-white cutter and the flat-topped, honey-coloured rocks on the beach the green water was troubled with shrimp-pink prisoners-of-war bathing. Behind their orderly tin camp and the electric-light poles rose those stone-dotted spurs that throw heat on Simonstown. Beneath them the little *Barracouta* nodded to the big *Gibraltar*, and the old *Penelope*, that in ten years has been bachelors' club, natural history museum, kindergarten, and prison, rooted and dug at her fixed moorings. Far out, a three-funnelled Atlantic transport with turtle bow and stern waddled in from the deep sea.

Said the sentry, assured of the visitor's good

faith, 'Talk to 'em? You can, to any that speak English. You'll find a lot that do.'

Here and there earnest groups gathered round ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church, who doubtless preached conciliation, but the majority preferred their bath. The God who Looks after Small Things had caused the visitor that day to receive two weeks' delayed mails in one from a casual postman, and the whole heavy bundle of newspapers, tied with a strap, he dangled as bait. At the edge of the beach, cross-legged, undressed to his sky-blue army shirt, sat a lean, ginger-haired man, on guard over a dozen heaps of clothing. His eyes followed the incoming Atlantic boat.

'Excuse me, Mister,' he said, without turning (and the speech betrayed his nationality), 'would you mind keeping away from these garments? I've been elected janitor—on the Dutch vote.'

The visitor moved over against the barbed-wire fence and sat down to his mail. At the rustle of the newspaper-wrappers the ginger-coloured man turned quickly, the hunger of a press-ridden people in his close-set iron-grey eyes.

'Have you any use for papers?' said the visitor.

'Have I any use?' A quick, curved forefinger was already snicking off the outer covers. 'Why, that's the New York postmark! Give me the

ads. at the back of *Harper's* and *M'Clure's* and I'm in touch with God's Country again! Did you know how I was aching for papers?'

The visitor told the tale of the casual postman.

'Providential!' said the ginger-coloured man, keen as a terrier on his task; 'both in time and matter. Yes! . . . The *Scientific American* yet once more! Oh, it's good! it's good!' His voice broke as he pressed his hawk-like nose against the heavily-inked patent-specifications at the end. 'Can I keep it? I thank you—I thank you! Why—why—well—well! The *American Tyler* of all things created! Do you subscribe to that?'

'I'm on the free list,' said the visitor, nodding.

He extended his blue-tanned hand with that air of Oriental spaciousness which distinguishes the native-born American, and met the visitor's grasp expertly. 'I can only say that you have treated me like a Brother (yes, I'll take every last one you can spare), and if ever——' He plucked at the bosom of his shirt. 'Psha! I forgot I'd no card on me; but my name's Zigler—Laughton O. Zigler. An American? If Ohio's still in the Union, I am, Sir. But I'm no extreme States'-rights man. I've used all of my native country and a few others as I have found occasion, and now I am the captive of your bow and spear.

I'm not kicking at that. I am not a coerced alien, nor a naturalised Texas mule-tender, nor an adventurer on the instalment plan. *I* don't tag after our Consul when he comes around, expecting the American Eagle to lift me out o' this by the slack of my pants. No, Sir! If a Britisher went into Indian Territory and shot up his surroundings with a Colt automatic (not that *she's* any sort of weapon, but I take her for an illustration), he'd be strung up quicker'n a snow-flake 'ud melt in hell. No ambassador of yours 'ud save him. I'm my neck ahead on this game, anyway. That's how I regard the proposition.

'Have I gone gunning against the British? To a certain extent. I presume you never heard tell of the Laughton-Zigler automatic two-inch field-gun, with self-feeding hopper, single oil-cylinder recoil, and ball-bearing gear throughout? Of Laughtite, the new explosive? Absolutely uniform in effect, and one-ninth the bulk of any present effete charge—flake, cannonite, cordite, troisdorf, cellulose, cocoa, cord, or prism—I don't care what it is. Laughtite's immense; so's the Zigler automatic. It's me. It's fifteen years of me. You are not a gun-sharp? I am sorry. I could have surprised you. Apart from my gun, my tale don't amount to much of anything. I thank you, but I don't use any tobacco you'd be

likely to carry . . . Bull Durham? *Bull Durham!* I take it all back—every last word. Bull Durham—here! If ever you strike Akron, Ohio, when this fool-war's over, remember you've Laughton O. Zigler in your vest pocket. Including the city of Akron. We've a little club there . . . Hell! What's the sense of talking Akron with no pants?

'My gun? . . . For two cents I'd have shipped her to our Filipeens. 'Came mighty near it too; but from what I'd read in the papers, you can't trust Aguinaldo's crowd on scientific matters. Why don't I offer it to our army? Well, you've an effete aristocracy running yours, and we've a crowd of politicians. The results are practically identical. I am not taking any U.S. Army in mine.

'I went to Amsterdam with her—to this Dutch junta that supposes it's bossing the war. I wasn't brought up to love the British for one thing, and for another I knew that if she got in her fine work (my gun) I'd stand more chance of receiving an unbiassed report from a crowd o' dam-fool British officers than from a hatful of politicians' nephews doing duty as commissaries and ordnance sharps. As I said, I put the brown man out of the question. That's the way *I* regarded the proposition.

'The Dutch in Holland don't amount to a row of pins. Maybe I misjudge 'em. Maybe they've

been swindled too often by self-seeking adventurers to know a enthusiast when they see him. Anyway, they're slower than the Wrath o' God. But on delusions—as to their winning out next Thursday week at 9 a.m.—they are—if I may say so—quite British.

'I'll tell you a curious thing, too. I fought 'em for ten days before I could get the financial side of my game fixed to my liking. I knew they didn't believe in the Zigler, but they'd no call to be crazy-mean. I fixed it—free passage and freight for me and the gun to Delagoa Bay, and beyond by steam and rail. Then I went aboard to see her crated, and there I struck my fellow-passengers—all deadheads, same as me. Well, Sir, I turned in my tracks where I stood and besieged the ticket-office, and I said, "Look at here, Van Dunk. I'm paying for my passage and her room in the hold—every square and cubic foot." 'Guess he knocked down the fare to himself; but I paid. I paid. I wasn't going to deadhead along o' *that* crowd of Pentecostal sweepings. 'Twould have hoodooed my gun for all time. That was the way I regarded the proposition. No, Sir, they were not pretty company.

'When we struck Pretoria I had a hell-and-a-half of a time trying to interest the Dutch vote in my gun an' her potentialities. The bottom

was out of things rather much just about that time. Kruger was praying some and stealing some, and the Hollander lot was singing, "If you haven't any money you needn't come round." Nobody was spending his dough on anything except tickets to Europe. We were both grossly neglected. When I think how I used to give performances in the public streets with dummy cartridges, filling the hopper and turning the handle till the sweat dropped off me, I blush, Sir. I've made her do her stunts before Kaffirs—naked sons of Ham—in Commissioner Street, trying to get a holt somewhere.

'Did I talk? I despise exaggeration—'tain't American or scientific—but as true as I'm sitting here like a blue-ended baboon in a kloof, Teddy Roosevelt's Western tour was a maiden's sigh compared to my advertising work.

''Long in the spring I was rescued by a commandant called Van Zyl—a big, fleshy man with a lame leg. Take away his hair and his gun and he'd make a first-class Schenectady bar-keep. He found me and the Zigler on the veldt (Pretoria wasn't wholesome at that time), and he annexed me in a somnambulistic sort o' way. He was dead against the war from the start, but, being a Dutchman, he fought a sight better than the rest of that "God and the Mauser" outfit. Adrian

Van Zyl. Slept a heap in the daytime—and didn't love niggers. I liked him. I was the only foreigner in his commando. The rest was Georgia Crackers and Pennsylvania Dutch—with a dash o' Philadelphia lawyer. I could tell you things about them would surprise you. Religion for one thing; women for another; but I don't know as their notions o' geography weren't the craziest. 'Guess that must be some sort of automatic compensation. There wasn't one blamed ant-hill in their district they didn't know *and* use; but the world was flat, they said, and England was a day's trek from Cape Town.

'They could fight in their own way, and don't you forget it. But I guess you will not. They fought to kill, and, by what I could make out, the British fought to be killed. So both parties were accommodated.

'I am the captive of your bow and spear, Sir. The position has its obligations—on both sides. You could not be offensive or partisan to me. I cannot, for the same reason, be offensive to you. Therefore I will not give you my opinions on the conduct of your war.

'Anyway, I didn't take the field as an offensive partisan, but as an inventor. It was a condition and not a theory that confronted me. (Yes, Sir, I'm a Democrat by conviction, and

that was one of the best things Grover Cleveland ever got off.)

'After three months' trek, old man Van Zyl had his commando in good shape and refitted off the British, and he reckoned he'd wait on a British General of his acquaintance that did business on a circuit between Stompiesneuk, Jackhalputs, Vrelegen, and Odendaalstroom, year in and year out. He was a fixture in that section.

'"He's a dam good man," says Van Zyl. "He's a friend of mine. He sent in a fine doctor when I was wounded and our Hollander doc. wanted to cut my leg off. Ya, I'll guess we'll stay with him." Up to date, me and my Zigler had lived in innocuous desuetude owing to little odds and ends riding out of gear. How in thunder was I to know there wasn't the ghost of any road in the country? But raw hide's cheap and lastin'. I guess I'll make my next gun a thousand pounds heavier, though.

'Well, Sir, we struck the General on his beat —Vrelegen it was—and our crowd opened with the usual compliments at two thousand yards. Van Zyl shook himself into his greasy old saddle and says, "Now we shall be quite happy, Mr. Zigler. No more trekking. Joost twelve miles a day till the apricots are ripe."

'Then we hitched on to his outposts, and vedettes, and cossack-picquets, or whatever they was called, and we wandered around the veldt arm in arm like brothers.

'The way we worked lodge was this way. The General, he had his breakfast at 8.45 a.m. to the tick. He might have been a Long Island commuter. At 8.42 a.m. I'd go down to the Thirty-fourth Street ferry to meet him—I mean I'd see the Zigler into position at two thousand (I began at three thousand, but that was cold and distant)—and blow him off to two full hoppers—eighteen rounds—just as they were bringing in his coffee. If his crowd was busy celebrating the anniversary of Waterloo or the last royal kid's birthday, they'd open on me with two guns (I'll tell you about them later on), but if they were disengaged they'd all stand to their horses and pile on the ironmongery, and washers, and type-writers, and five weeks' grub, and in half an hour they'd sail out after me and the rest of Van Zyl's boys; lying down and firing till 11.45 a.m. or maybe high noon. Then we'd go from labour to refreshment, resooming at 2 p.m. and battling till tea-time. Tuesday and Friday was the General's moving days. He'd trek ahead ten or twelve miles, and we'd loaf around his flankers and exercise the ponies a piece. Sometimes he'd get

hung up in a drift—stalled crossin' a crick—and we'd make playful snatches at his wagons. First time that happened I turned the Zigler loose with high hopes, Sir; but the old man was well posted on rearguards with a gun to 'em, and I had to haul her out with three mules instead o' six. I was pretty mad. I wasn't looking for any experts back of the Royal British Artillery. Otherwise, the game was mostly even. He'd lay out three or four of our commando, and we'd gather in four or five of his once a week or thereon. One time, I remember, 'long towards dusk we saw 'em burying five of their boys. They stood pretty thick around the graves. We wasn't more than fifteen hundred yards off, but old Van Zyl wouldn't fire. He just took off his hat at the proper time. He said if you stretched a man at his prayers you'd have to hump his bad luck before the Throne as well as your own. I am inclined to agree with him. So we browsed along week in and week out. A war-sharp might have judged it sort of docile, but for an inventor needing practice one day and peace the next for checking his theories, it suited Laughton O. Zigler.

'And friendly? Friendly was no word for it. We was brothers in arms.

'Why, I knew those two guns of the Royal British Artillery as well as I used to know the

old Fifth Avenoo stages. *They* might have been brothers too.

'They'd jolt into action, and wiggle around and skid and spit and cough and prize 'emselves back again during our hours of bloody battle till I could have wept, Sir, at the spectacle of modern white men chained up to these old hand-power, back-number, flint-and-steel reaping machines. One of 'em—I called her Baldy—she'd a long white scar all along her barrel—I'd made sure of twenty times. I knew her crew by sight, but she'd come switching and teturing out of the dust of my shells like—like a hen from under a buggy—and she'd dip into a gully, and next thing I'd know 'ud be her old nose peeking over the ridge sniffin' for us. Her runnin' mate had two grey mules in the lead, and a natural wood wheel repainted, and a whole raft of rope-ends trailin' around. 'J'ever see Tom Reed with his vest off, steerin' Congress through a heat-wave? I've been to Washington often—too often—filin' my patents. I called her Tom Reed. We three 'ud play pussy-wants-a-corner all round the outposts on off-days—cross-lots through the sage and along the mezas till we was short-circuited by cañons. Oh, it was great for me and Baldy and Tom Reed! I don't know as we didn't neglect the legitimate interests of our respective

commandoes sometimes for this ball-play. I know *I* did.

"'Long towards the fall the Royal British Artillery grew shy—hung back in their breeching sort of—and their shooting was way—way off. I observed they wasn't taking any chances, not though I acted kitten almost underneath 'em.

'I mentioned it to Van Zyl, because it struck me I had about knocked their Royal British moral endways.

'"No," says he, rocking as usual on his pony. "My Captain Mankeltow he is sick. That is all."

'"So's your Captain Mankeltow's guns," I said. "But I'm going to make 'em a heap sicker before he gets well."

'"No," says Van Zyl. "He has had the enteric a little. Now he is better, and he was let out from hospital at Jackhalputs. Ah, that Mankeltow! He always makes me laugh so. I told him—long back—at Colesberg, I had a little home for him at Nooitgedacht. But he would not come—no! He has been sick, and I am sorry."

'"How d'you know that?" I says.

'"Why, only to-day he sends back his love by Johanna Van der Merwe, that goes to their doctor for her sick baby's eyes. He sends his love, that Mankeltow, and he tells her tell me he has a little garden of roses all ready for me in the

Dutch Indies—Umballa. He is very funny, my Captain Mankeltow."

'The Dutch and the English ought to fraternise, Sir. They've the same notions of humour, to my thinking.

'"When he gets well," says Van Zyl, "you look out, Mr. Americaan. He comes back to his guns next Tuesday. Then they shoot better."

'I wasn't so well acquainted with the Royal British Artillery as old man Van Zyl. I knew this Captain Mankeltow by sight, of course, and, considering what sort of a man with the hoe he was, I thought he'd done right well against my Zigler. But nothing epoch-making.

'Next morning at the usual hour I waited on the General, and old Van Zyl come along with some of the boys. Van Zyl didn't hang round the Zigler much as a rule, but this was his luck that day.

'He was peeking through his glasses at the camp, and I was helping pepper the General's sow-belly—just as usual—when he turns to me quick and says, "Almighty! How all these Englishmen are liars! You cannot trust one," he says. "Captain Mankeltow tells our Johanna he comes not back till Tuesday, and to-day is Friday, and there he is! Almighty! The English are all Chamberlains!"

'If the old man hadn't stopped to make political speeches he'd have had his supper in laager that night, I guess. I was busy attending to Tom Reed at two thousand when Baldy got in her fine work on me. I saw one sheet of white flame wrapped round the hopper, and in the middle of it there was one o' my mules straight on end. Nothing out of the way in a mule on end, but this mule hadn't any head. I remember it struck me as incongruous at the time, and when I'd ciphered it out I was doing the Santos-Dumont act without any balloon and my motor out of gear. Then I got to thinking about Santos-Dumont and how much better my new way was. Then I thought about Professor Langley and the Smithsonian, and wishing I hadn't lied so extravagantly in some of my specifications at Washington. Then I quit thinking for quite a while, and when I resumed my train of thought I was nude, Sir, in a very stale stretcher, and my mouth was full of fine dirt all flavoured with Laughtite.

'I coughed up that dirt.

'"Hullo!" says a man walking beside me. "You've spoke almost in time. Have a drink?"

'I don't use rum as a rule, but I did then, because I needed it.

'"What hit us?" I said.

'"Me," he said. "I got you fair on the

hopper as you pulled out of that donga; but I'm sorry to say every last round in the hopper's exploded and your gun's in a shocking state. I'm real sorry," he says. "I admire your gun, Sir."

'"Are you Captain Mankeltow?" I says.

'"Yes," he says. "I presoom you're Mister Zigler. Your commanding officer told me about you."

'"Have you gathered in old man Van Zyl?" I said.

'"Commandant Van Zyl," he says very stiff, "was most unfortunately wounded, but I am glad to say it's not serious. We hope he'll be able to dine with us to-night; and I feel sure," he says, "the General would be delighted to see you too, though he didn't expect," he says, "and no one else either, by Jove!" he says, and blushed like the British do when they're embarrassed.

'I saw him slide an Episcopalian Prayer-book up his sleeve, and when I looked over the edge of the stretcher there was half-a-dozen enlisted men—privates—had just quit digging and was standing to attention by their spades. I guess he was right on the General not expecting me to dinner; but it was all of a piece with their sloppy British way of doing business. Any God's quantity of fuss and flubdub to bury a man, and not an ounce of forehandedness in the whole outfit

to find out whether he was rightly dead. And I am a Congregationalist anyway!

'Well, Sir, that was my introduction to the British Army. I'd write a book about it if anyone would believe me. This Captain Mankeltow, Royal British Artillery, turned the doctor on me (I could write another book about *him*) and fixed me up with a suit of his own clothes, and fed me canned beef and biscuits, and give me a cigar—a Henry Clay and a whisky-and-sparklet. He was a white man.

'"Ye-es, by Jove," he said, dragging out his words like a twist of molasses, "we've all admired your gun and the way you've worked it. Some of us betted you was a British deserter. I won a sovereign on that from a yeoman. And, by the way," he says, "you've disappointed me groom pretty bad."

'"Where does your groom come in?" I said.

'"Oh, he was the yeoman. He's a dam poor groom," says my captain, "but he's a way-up barrister when he's at home. He's been running around the camp with his tongue out, waiting for the chance of defending you at the court-martial."

'"What court-martial?" I says.

'"On you as a deserter from the Artillery. You'd have had a good run for your money. Anyway, you'd never have been hung after the

way you worked your gun. Deserter ten times over," he says, "I'd have stuck out for shooting you like a gentleman."

'Well, Sir, right there it struck me at the pit of my stomach—sort of sickish, sweetish feeling—that my position needed regularising pretty bad. I ought to have been a naturalised burgher of a year's standing; but Ohio's my State, and I wouldn't have gone back on her for a desertful of Dutchmen. That and my enthoosiasm as an inventor had led me to the existing crisis; but I couldn't expect this Captain Mankeltow to regard the proposition that way. There I sat, the rankest breed of unreconstructed American citizen, caught red-handed squirting hell at the British Army for months on end. I tell *you*, Sir, I wished I was in Cincinnatah that summer evening. I'd have compromised on Brooklyn.

'"What d'you do about aliens?" I said, and the dirt I'd coughed up seemed all back of my tongue again.

'"Oh," says he, "we don't do much of anything. They're about all the society we get. I'm a bit of a pro-Boer myself," he says, "but between you and me the average Boer ain't over and above intellectual. You're the first American we've met up with, but of course you're a burgher."

'It was what I ought to have been if I'd had

the sense of a common tick, but the way he drawled it out made me mad.

'"Of course I am not," I says. "Would *you* be a naturalised Boer?"

'"I'm fighting against 'em," he says, lighting a cigarette, "but it's all a matter of opinion."

'"Well," I says, "you can hold any blame opinion you choose, but I'm a white man, and my present intention is to die in that colour."

'He laughed one of those big, thick-ended, British laughs that don't lead anywhere, and whacked up some sort of compliment about America that made me mad all through.

'I am the captive of your bow and spear, Sir, but I do not understand the alleged British joke. It is depressing.

'I was introdooced to five or six officers that evening, and every blame one of 'em grinned and asked me why I wasn't in the Filipeens suppressing our war! And that was British humour! They all had to get it off their chests before they'd talk sense. But they was sound on the Zigler. They had all admired her. I made out a fairy-story of me being wearied of the war, and having pushed the gun at them these last three months in the hope they'd capture it and let me go home. That tickled 'em to death. They made me say it three times over, and laughed like kids each time.

But half the British *are* kids; specially the older men. My Captain Mankeltow was less of it than the others. He talked about the Zigler like a lover, Sir, and I drew him diagrams of the hopper-feed and recoil-cylinder in his note-book. He asked the one British question I was waiting for, "Hadn't I made my working-parts too light?" The British think weight's strength.

'At last—I'd been shy of opening the subject before—at last I said, "Gentlemen, you are the unprejudiced tribunal I've been hunting after. I guess you ain't interested in any other gun-factory, and politics don't weigh with you. How did it feel your end of the game? What's my gun done, anyway?"

'"I hate to disappoint you," says Captain Mankeltow, "because I know how you feel as an inventor." I wasn't feeling like an inventor just then. I felt friendly, but the British haven't more tact than you can pick up with a knife out of a plate of soup.

'"The honest truth," he says, "is that you've wounded about ten of us one way and another, killed two battery horses and four mules, and—oh, yes," he said, "you've bagged five Kaffirs. But, buck up," he says, "we've all had mighty close calls"—shaves, he called 'em, I remember. "Look at my pants."

'They was repaired right across the seat with Minneapolis flour-bagging. I could see the stencil.

'"I ain't bluffing," he says. "Get the hospital returns, Doc."

'The doctor gets 'em and reads 'em out under the proper dates. That doctor alone was worth the price of admission.

'I was pleased right through that I hadn't killed any of these cheerful kids; but none the less I couldn't help thinking that a few more Kaffirs would have served me just as well for advertising purposes as white men. No, Sir. Anywhichway you regard the proposition, twenty-one casualties after months of close friendship like ours was—paltry.

'They gave me taffy about the gun—the British use taffy where we use sugar. It's cheaper, and gets there just the same. They sat around and proved to me that my gun was too good, too uniform—shot as close as a Männlicher rifle.

'Says one kid chewing a bit of grass: "I counted eight of your shells, Sir, burst in a radius of ten feet. All of 'em would have gone through one waggon-tilt. It was beautiful," he says. "It was too good."

'I shouldn't wonder if the boys were right. My Laughtite is too mathematically uniform in

propelling power. Yes; she was too good for this refractory fool of a country. The training-gear was broke, too, and we had to swivel her around by the trail. But I'll build my next Zigler fifteen hundred pounds heavier. Might work in a gasoline motor under the axles. I must think that up.

'"Well, gentlemen," I said, "I'd hate to have been the death of any of you; and if a prisoner can deed away his property, I'd love to present the Captain here with what he's seen fit to leave of my Zigler."

'"Thanks awf'ly," says my Captain. "I'd like her very much. She'd look fine in the mess at Woolwich. That is, if you don't mind, Mr. Zigler."

'"Go right ahead," I says. "I've come out of all the mess I've any use for; but she'll do to spread the light among the Royal British Artillery."

'I tell you, Sir, there's not much of anything the matter with the Royal British Artillery. They're brainy men languishing under an effete system which, when you take good holt of it, is England—just all England. 'Times I'd feel I was talking with real live citizens, and times I'd feel I'd struck the Beef-eaters in the Tower.

'How? Well, this way. I was telling my Captain Mankeltow what Van Zyl had said about the British being all Chamberlains when the old

man saw him back from hospital four days ahead of time.

'"Oh, dam it all!" he says, as serious as the Supreme Court. "It's too bad," he says. "Johanna must have misunderstood me, or else I've got the wrong Dutch word for these blarsted days of the week. I told Johanna I'd be out on Friday. The woman's a fool. Oah, da-am it all!" he says. "I wouldn't have sold old Van Zyl a pup like that," he says. "I'll hunt him up and apologise."

'He must have fixed it all right, for when we sailed over to the General's dinner my Captain had Van Zyl about half-full of sherry and bitters, as happy as a clam. The boys all called him Adrian, and treated him like their prodigal father. He'd been hit on the collar-bone by a wad of shrapnel, and his arm was tied up.

'But the General was the peach. I presume you're acquainted with the average run of British generals, but this was my first. I sat on his left hand, and he talked like—like the *Ladies' Home Journal*. 'J'ever read that paper? It's refined, Sir—and innocuous, and full of nickel-plated sentiments guaranteed to improve the mind. He was it. He began by a Lydia Pinkham heart-to-heart talk about my health, and hoped the boys had done me well, and that I was enjoying

my stay in their midst. Then he thanked me for the interesting and valuable lessons that I'd given his crowd — specially in the matter of placing artillery and rearguard attacks. He'd wipe his long thin moustache between drinks—lime-juice and water he used—and blat off into a long "a-aah," and ladle out more taffy for me or old man Van Zyl on his right. I told him how I'd had my first Pisgah-sight of the principles of the Zigler when I was a fourth-class postmaster on a star-route in Arkansas. I told him how I'd worked it up by instalments when I was machinist in Waterbury, where the dollar-watches come from. He had one on his wrist then. I told him how I'd met Zalinski (he'd never heard of Zalinski!) when I was an extra clerk in the Naval Construction Bureau at Washington. I told him how my uncle, who was a truck-farmer in Noo Jersey (he loaned money on mortgage too, for ten acres ain't enough now in Noo Jersey), how he'd willed me a quarter of a million dollars, because I was the only one of our kin that called him down when he used to come home with a hard-cider jag on him and heave ox-bows at his nieces. I told him how I'd turned in every red cent on the Zigler, and I told him the whole circus of my coming out with her, and so on, and so following; and every forty seconds he'd wipe his moustache

and blat, "How interesting. Really, now? How interesting."

'It was like being in an old English book, Sir. Like *Bracebridge Hall*. But an American wrote *that*! I kept peeking around for the Boar's Head and the Rosemary and Magna Charta and the Cricket on the Hearth, and the rest of the outfit. Then Van Zyl whirled in. He was no ways jagged, but thawed — thawed, Sir, and among friends. They began discussing previous scraps all along the old man's beat—about sixty of 'em—as well as side-shows with other generals and columns. Van Zyl told 'im of a big beat he'd worked on a column a week or so before I'd joined him. He demonstrated his strategy with forks on the table.

'"There!" said the General, when he'd finished. "That proves my contention to the hilt. Maybe I'm a bit of a pro-Boer, but I stick to it," he says, "that under proper officers, with due regard to his race prejudices, the Boer 'ud make the finest mounted infantry in the Empire. Adrian," he says, "you're simply squandered on a cattle-run. You ought to be at the Staff College with De Wet."

'"You catch De Wet and I come to your Staff College—eh," says Adrian, laughing. "But you are so slow, Generaal. Why are you so slow? For

a month," he says, "you do so well and strong that we say we shall hands-up and come back to our farms. Then you send to England and make us a present of two—three—six hundred young men, with rifles and wagons and rum and tobacco, and such a great lot of cartridges, that our young men put up their tails and start all over again. If you hold an ox by the horn and hit him by the bottom he runs round and round. He never goes anywhere. So, too, this war goes round and round. You know that, Generaal!"

'"Quite right, Adrian," says the General; "but you must believe your Bible."

'"Hooh!" says Adrian, and reaches for the whisky. I've never known a Dutchman a professing Atheist, but some few have been rather active Agnostics since the British sat down in Pretoria. Old man Van Zyl—he told me—had soured on religion after Bloemfontein surrendered. He was a Free Stater for one thing.

'"He that believeth," says the General, "shall not make haste. That's in Isaiah. We believe we're going to win, and so we don't make haste. As far as I'm concerned I'd like this war to last another five years. We'd have an army then. It's just this way, Mr. Zigler," he says, "our people are brim-full of patriotism, but they've been born and brought up between houses, and

England ain't big enough to train 'em—not if you expect to preserve."

'"Preserve what?" I says. "England?"

'"No. The game," he says; "and that reminds me, gentlemen, we haven't drunk the King and Fox-hunting."

'So they drank the King and Fox-hunting. I drank the King because there's something about Edward that tickles me (he's so blame British); but I rather stood out on the Fox-hunting. I've ridden wolves in the cattle-country, and needed a drink pretty bad afterwards, but it never struck me as I ought to drink about it—he-red-it-arily.

'"No, as I was saying, Mr. Zigler," he goes on, "we have to train our men in the field to shoot and ride. I allow six months for it; but many column-commanders—not that I ought to say a word against 'em, for they're the best fellows that ever stepped, and most of 'em are my dearest friends—seem to think that if they have men and horses and guns they can take tea with the Boers. It's generally the other way about, ain't it, Mr. Zigler?"

'"To some extent, Sir," I said.

'"I'm *so* glad you agree with me," he says. "My command here I regard as a training depot, and you, if I may say so, have been one of my most efficient instructors. I mature my men slowly

but thoroughly. First I put 'em in a town which is liable to be attacked by night, where they can attend riding-school in the day. Then I use 'em with a convoy, and last I put 'em into a column. It takes time," he says, "but I flatter myself that any men who have worked under me are at least grounded in the rudiments of their profession. Adrian," he says, "was there anything wrong with the men who upset Van Besters' apple-cart last month when he was trying to cross the line to join Piper with those horses he'd stole from Gabbitas?"

'"No, Generaal," says Van Zyl. "Your men got the horses back and eleven dead; and Van Besters, he ran to Delarey in his shirt. They was very good, those men. They shoot hard."

'"*So* pleased to hear you say so. I laid 'em down at the beginning of this century—a 1900 vintage. *You* remember 'em, Mankeltow?" he says. "The Central Middlesex Buncho Busters —clerks and floor-walkers mostly," and he wiped his moustache. "It was just the same with the Liverpool Buckjumpers, but they were stevedores. Let's see—they were a last-century draft, weren't they? They did well after nine months. *You* know 'em, Van Zyl? You didn't get much change out of 'em at Pootfontein?"

'"No," says Van Zyl. "At Pootfontein I lost my son Andries."

'"I beg your pardon, Commandant," says the General; and the rest of the crowd sort of cooed over Adrian.

'"Excoose," says Adrian. "It was all right. They were good men those, but it is just what I say. Some are so dam good we want to hands-up, and some are so dam bad, we say, 'Take the Vierkleur into Cape Town.' It is not upright of you, Generaal. It is not upright of you at all. I do not think you ever wish this war to finish."

'"It's a first-class dress-parade for Armageddon," says the General. "With luck, we ought to run half a million men through the mill. Why, we might even be able to give our Native Army a look in. Oh, not here, of course, Adrian, but down in the Colony—say a camp-of-exercise at Worcester. You mustn't be prejudiced, Adrian. I've commanded a district in India, and I give you my word the native troops are splendid men."

'"Oh, I should not mind them at Worcester," says Adrian. "I would sell you forage for them at Worcester—yes, and Paarl and Stellenbosch; but Almighty!" he says, "must I stay with Cronje till you have taught half a million of these stupid boys to ride? I shall be an old man."

'Well, Sir, then and there they began arguing whether St. Helena would suit Adrian's health as

well as some other places they knew about, and fixing up letters of introduction to Dukes and Lords of their acquaintance, so's Van Zyl should be well looked after. We own a fair-sized block of real estate—America does—but it made me sickish to hear this crowd fluttering round the Atlas (oh yes, they had an Atlas), and choosing stray continents for Adrian to drink his coffee in. The old man allowed he didn't want to roost with Cronje, because one of Cronje's kin had jumped one of his farms after Paardeberg. I forget the rights of the case, but it was interesting. They decided on a place called Umballa in India, because there was a first-class doctor there.

'So Adrian was fixed to drink the King and Fox-hunting, and study up the Native Army in India (I'd like to see 'em myself), till the British General had taught the male white citizens of Great Britain how to ride. Don't misunderstand me, Sir. I loved that General. After ten minutes I loved him, and I wanted to laugh at him; but at the same time, sitting there and hearing him talk about the centuries, I tell you, Sir, it scared me. It scared me cold! He admitted everything—he acknowledged the corn before you spoke—he was more pleased to hear that his men had been used to wipe the veldt with than I was when I knocked out Tom Reed's two lead-horses—and

he sat back and blew smoke through his nose and matured his men like cigars and—he talked of the everlastin' centuries!

'I went to bed nearer nervous prostration than I'd come in a long time. Next morning me and Captain Mankeltow fixed up what his shrapnel had left of my Zigler for transport to the railroad. She went in on her own wheels, and I stencilled her "Royal Artillery Mess, Woolwich," on the muzzle, and he said he'd be grateful if I'd take charge of her to Cape Town, and hand her over to a man in the Ordnance there. "How are you fixed financially? You'll need some money on the way home," he says at last.

'"For one thing, Cap," I said, "I'm not a poor man, and for another I'm not going home. I am the captive of your bow and spear. I decline to resign office."

'"Skittles!" he says (that was a great word of his), "you'll take parole, and go back to America and invent another Zigler, a trifle heavier in the working-parts—I would. We've got more prisoners than we know what to do with as it is," he says. "You'll only be an additional expense to me as a taxpayer. Think of Schedule D," he says, "and take parole."

'"I don't know anything about your tariffs," I said, "but when I get to Cape Town I write home

for money, and I turn in every cent my board 'll cost your country to any ten-century-old department that's been ordained to take it since William the Conqueror came along."

'"But, confound you for a thick-headed mule," he says, "this war ain't any more than just started! Do you mean to tell me you're going to play prisoner till it's over?"

'"That's about the size of it," I says, "if an Englishman and an American could ever understand each other."

'"But, in Heaven's Holy Name, why?" he says, sitting down of a heap on an ant-hill.

'"Well, Cap," I says, "I don't pretend to follow your ways of thought, and I can't see why you abuse your position to persecute a poor prisoner o' war on *his*!"

'"My dear fellow," he began, throwing up his hands and blushing, "I'll apologise."

'"But if you insist," I says, "there are just one and a half things in this world I can't do. The odd half don't matter here; but taking parole, and going home, and being interviewed by the boys, and giving lectures on my single-handed campaign against the hereditary enemies of my beloved country happens to be the one. We'll let it go at that, Cap."

'"But it'll bore you to death," he says. The

British are a heap more afraid of what they call being bored than of dying, I've noticed.

'"I'll survive," I says, "I ain't British. I can think," I says.

'"By God," he says, coming up to me, and extending the right hand of fellowship, "you ought to be English, Zigler!"

'It's no good getting mad at a compliment like that. The English all do it. They're a crazy breed. When they don't know you they freeze up tighter'n the St. Lawrence. When they *do*, they go out like an ice-jam in April. Up till we prisoners left—four days—my Captain Mankeltow told me pretty much all about himself there was; —his mother and sisters, and his bad brother that was a trooper in some Colonial corps, and how his father didn't get on with him, and—well, everything, as I've said. They're undomesticated, the British, compared with us. They talk about their own family affairs as if they belonged to someone else. 'Tain't as if they hadn't any shame, but it sounds like it. I guess they talk out loud what we think, and we talk out loud what they think.

'I liked my Captain Mankeltow. I liked him as well as any man I'd ever struck. He was white. He gave me his silver drinking-flask, and I gave him the formula of my Laughtite. That's

a hundred and fifty thousand dollars in his vest-pocket, on the lowest count, if he has the knowledge to use it. No, I didn't tell him the money-value. He was English. He'd send his valet to find out.

'Well, me and Adrian and a crowd of dam Dutchmen was sent down the road to Cape Town in first-class carriages under escort. (What did I think of your enlisted men? They are largely different from ours, Sir: very largely.) As I was saying, we slid down south, with Adrian looking out of the car-window and crying. Dutchmen cry mighty easy for a breed that fights as they do; but I never understood how a Dutchman could curse till we crossed into the Orange Free State Colony, and he lifted up his hand and cursed Steyn for a solid ten minutes. Then we got into the Colony, and the rebs—ministers mostly and schoolmasters—came round the cars with fruit and sympathy and texts. Van Zyl talked to 'em in Dutch, and one man, a big red-bearded minister, at Beaufort West, I remember, he jest wilted on the platform.

'"Keep your prayers for yourself," says Van Zyl, throwing back a bunch of grapes. "You'll need 'em, and you'll need the fruit too, when the war comes down here. *You* done it," he says. "You and your picayune Church that's deader than

Cronje's dead horses! What sort of a God have you been unloading on us, you black *aas vogels*? The British came, and we beat 'em," he says, "and you sat still and prayed. The British beat us, and you sat still," he says. "You told us to hang on, and we hung on, and our farms was burned, and you sat still—you and your God. See here," he says, "I shot my Bible full of bullets after Bloemfontein went, and you and God didn't say anything. Take it and pray over it before we Federals help the British to knock hell out of you rebels."

'Then I hauled him back into the car. I judged he'd had a fit. But life's curious—and sudden—and mixed. I hadn't any more use for a reb than Van Zyl, and I knew something of the lies they'd fed us up with from the Colony for a year and more. I told the minister to pull his freight out of that, and went on with my lunch, when another man come along and shook hands with Van Zyl. He'd known him at close range in the Kimberley siege and before. Van Zyl was well seen by his neighbours, I judge. As soon as this other man opened his mouth I said, "You're Kentucky, ain't you?" "I am," he says; "and what may you be?" I told him right off, for I was pleased to hear good United States in any man's mouth; but he whipped his hands behind

him and said, "I'm not knowing any man that fights for a Tammany Dutchman. But I presoom you've been well paid, you dam gun-runnin' Yank."

'Well, Sir, I wasn't looking for that, and it near knocked me over, while old man Van Zyl started in to explain.

'"Don't you waste your breath, Mister Van Zyl," the man says. "I know this breed. The South's full of 'em." Then he whirls round on me and says, "Look at here, you Yank. A little thing like a King's neither here nor there, but what *you've* done," he says, "is to go back on the White Man in six places at once—two hemispheres and four continents—America, England, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. Don't open your head," he says. "You know right well if you'd been caught at this game in our country you'd have been jiggling in the bight of a lariat before you could reach for your naturalisation papers. Go on and prosper," he says, "and you'll fetch up by fighting for niggers, as the North did." And he threw me half-a-crown—English money.

'Sir, I do not regard the proposition in that light, but I guess I must have been somewhat shook by the explosion. They told me at Cape Town one rib was driven in on to my lungs. I am not

adducing this as an excuse, but the cold God's truth of the matter is—the money on the floor did it. . . . I give up and cried. Put my head down and cried.

'I dream about this still sometimes. He didn't know the circumstances, but I dream about it. And it's Hell!

'How do you regard the proposition—as a Brother? If you'd invented your own gun, and spent fifty-seven thousand dollars on her—and had paid your own expenses from the word "go"? An American citizen has a right to choose his own side in an unpleasantness, and Van Zyl wasn't any Krugerite . . . and I'd risked my hide at my own expense. I got that man's address from Van Zyl; he was a mining man at Kimberley, and I wrote him the facts. But he never answered. Guess he thought I lied. . . . Damned Southern rebel!

'Oh, say. Did I tell you my Captain gave me a letter to an English Lord in Cape Town, and he fixed things so's I could lie up a piece in his house? I was pretty sick, and threw up some blood from where the rib had gouged into the lung—here. This Lord was a crank on guns, and he took charge of the Zigler. He had his knife into the British system as much as any American. He said he wanted revolution, and not reform, in your army. He said the British soldier had failed in

every point except courage. He said England needed a Monroe Doctrine worse than America—a new doctrine, barring out all the Continent, and strictly devoting herself to developing her own Colonies. He said he'd abolish half the Foreign Office, and take all the old hereditary families clean out of it, because, he said, they was expressly trained to fool around with continental diplomats, and to despise the Colonies. His own family wasn't more than six hundred years old. He was a very brainy man, and a good citizen. We talked politics and inventions together when my lung let up on me.

'Did he know my General? Yes. He knew 'em all. Called 'em Teddie and Gussie and Willie. They was all of the very best, and all his dearest friends; but he told me confidentially they was none of 'em fit to command a column in the field. He said they were too fond of advertising. Generals don't seem very different from actors or doctors or—yes, Sir—inventors.

'He fixed things for me lovelily at Simonstown. Had the biggest sort of pull—even for a Lord. At first they treated me as a harmless lunatic; but after a while I got 'em to let me keep some of their books. If I was left alone in the world with the British system of book-keeping, I'd reconstruct the whole British Empire—beginning

with the Army. Yes, I'm one of their most trusted accountants, and I'm paid for it. As much as a dollar a day. I keep that. I've earned it, and I deduct it from the cost of my board. When the war's over I'm going to pay up the balance to the British Government. Yes, Sir, that's how I regard the proposition.

'Adrian? Oh, he left for Umballa four months back. He told me he was going to apply to join the National Scouts if the war didn't end in a year. 'Tisn't in nature for one Dutchman to shoot another, but if Adrian ever meets up with Steyn there'll be an exception to the rule. Ye-es, when the war's over it'll take some of the British Army to protect Steyn from his fellow-patriots. But the war won't be over yet a while. He that believeth don't hurry, as Isaiah says. The ministers and the school-teachers and the rebs 'll have a war all to themselves long after the north is quiet.

'I'm pleased with this country—it's big. Not so many folk on the ground as in America. There's a boom coming sure. I've talked it over with Adrian, and I guess I shall buy a farm somewhere near Bloemfontein and start in cattle-raising. It's big and peaceful—a ten-thousand-acre farm. I could go on inventing there, too. I'll sell my Zigler, I guess. I'll offer the patent rights to the British Government; and if they do the "reelly-

now-how-interesting" act over her, I'll turn her over to Captain Mankeltow and his friend the Lord. They'll pretty quick find some Gussie, or Teddie, or Algie who can get her accepted in the proper quarters. I'm beginning to know my English.

'And now I'll go in swimming, and read the papers after lunch. I haven't had such a good time since Willie died.'

He pulled the blue shirt over his head as the bathers returned to their piles of clothing, and, speaking through the folds, added:

'But if you want to realise your assets, you should lease the whole proposition to America for ninety-nine years.'

THE BONDS OF DISCIPLINE

POSEIDON'S LAW

When the robust and brass-bound man commissioned first for sea
His fragile raft, Poseidon laughed, and, 'Mariner,' said he,
'Behold, a Law immutable I lay on thee and thine,
That never shall ye act or tell a falsehood at my shrine.

'Let Zeus adjudge your landward kin, whose votive meal and salt
At easy-cheated altars win oblivion for the fault,
But ye the unhoodwinked waves shall test—the immediate gulfs condemn—
Unless ye owe the Fates a jest, be slow to jest with them.

'Ye shall not clear by Greekly speech, nor cozen from your path
The twinkling shoal, the leeward beach, and Hadria's white-lipped wrath;
Nor tempt with painted cloth for wood my fraud-avenging hosts;
Nor make at all or all make good your bulwarks and your boasts.

'Now and henceforward serve unshod through wet and wakeful shifts,
A present and oppressive God, but take, to aid, my gifts—
The wide and windward-opened eye, the large and lavish hand,
The soul that cannot tell a lie—except upon the land!'

TRAFFICS AND DISCOVERIES

In dromond and in catafract—wet, wakeful, windward-eyed—
He kept Poseidon's Law intact (his ship and freight beside),
But, once discharged the dromond's hold, the bireme beached once more,
Splendaciously mendacious rolled the brass-bound man ashore.

. . . . .

The thranite now and thalamite are pressures low and high,
And where three hundred blades bit white the twin-propellers ply:
The God that hailed, the keel that sailed, are changed beyond recall,
But the robust and brass-bound man he is not changed at all!

From Punt returned, from Phormio's Fleet, from Javan and Gadire,
He strongly occupies the seat about the tavern fire,
And, moist with much Falernian or smoked Massilian juice,
Revenges there the brass-bound man his long-enforced truce!

THE BONDS OF DISCIPLINE

AS literature, it is beneath contempt. It concerns the endurance, armament, turning-circle, and inner gear of every ship in the British Navy—the whole embellished with profile plates. The Teuton approaches the matter with pagan thoroughness; the Muscovite runs him close; but the Gaul, ever an artist, breaks enclosure to study the morale, at the present day, of the British sailorman.

In this, I conceive, he is from time to time aided by the zealous amateur, though I find very little in his dispositions to show that he relies on that amateur's hard-won information. There exists—unlike some other publication, it is not bound in lead boards—a work by one 'M. de C.,' based on the absolutely unadorned performances of one of our well-known *Acolyte* type of cruisers. It contains nothing that did not happen. It covers a period of two days; runs to twenty-seven

pages of large type exclusive of appendices; and carries as many exclamation points as the average Dumas novel.

I read it with care, from the adorably finished prologue—it is the disgrace of our Navy that we cannot produce a commissioned officer capable of writing one page of lyric prose—to the eloquent, the joyful, the impassioned end; and my first notion was that I had been cheated. In this sort of book-collecting you will see how entirely the bibliophile lies at the mercy of his agent.

'M. de C.,' I read, opened his campaign by stowing away in one of her boats what time H.M.S. *Archimandrite* lay off Funchal. 'M. de C.' was, always on behalf of his country, a Madeira Portuguese fleeing from the conscription. They discovered him eighty miles at sea and bade him assist the cook. So far this seemed fairly reasonable. Next day, thanks to his histrionic powers and his ingratiating address, he was promoted to the rank of 'supernumerary captain's servant'—a 'post which,' I give his words, 'I flatter myself, was created for me alone, and furnished me with opportunities unequalled for a task in which one word malapropos would have been my destruction.'

From this point onward, earth and water between them held no marvels like to those 'M. de C.' had 'envisaged'—if I translate him correctly.

It became clear to me that 'M. de C.' was either a pyramidal liar, or . . .

I was not acquainted with any officer, seaman, or marine in the *Archimandrite*; but instinct told me I could not go far wrong if I took a third-class ticket to Plymouth.

I gathered information on the way from a leading stoker, two seaman-gunners, and an odd hand in a torpedo factory. They courteously set my feet on the right path, and that led me through the alleys of Devonport to a public-house not fifty yards from the water. We drank with the proprietor, a huge, yellowish man called Tom Wessels; and when my guides had departed, I asked if he could produce any warrant or petty officer of the *Archimandrite*.

'The *Bedlamite*, d'you mean—'er last commission, when they all went crazy?'

'Shouldn't wonder,' I replied. 'Fetch me a sample and I'll see.'

'You'll excuse me, o' course, but—what d'you want 'im *for*?'

'I want to make him drunk. I want to make you drunk—if you like. I want to make him drunk here.'

'Spoke very 'andsome. I'll do what I can.' He went out towards the water that lapped at the

foot of the street. I gathered from the pot-boy that he was a person of influence beyond Admirals.

In a few minutes I heard the noise of an advancing crowd, and the voice of Mr. Wessels.

''E only wants to make you drunk at 'is expense. Dessay 'e'll stand you all a drink. Come up an' look at 'im. 'E don't bite.'

A square man, with remarkable eyes, entered at the head of six large bluejackets. Behind them gathered a contingent of hopeful free-drinkers.

''E's the only one I could get. Transferred to the *Postulant* six months back. I found 'im quite accidental.' Mr. Wessels beamed.

'I'm in charge o' the cutter. Our wardroom is dinin' on the beach *en masse*. They won't be home till mornin',' said the square man with the remarkable eyes.

'Are you an *Archimandrite*?' I demanded.

'That's me. I was, as you might say.'

'Hold on. I'm a *Archimandrite*.' A Red Marine with moist eyes tried to climb on the table. 'Was you lookin' for a *Bedlamite*? I've —I've been invalided, an' what with that, an' visitin' my family 'ome at Lewes, per'aps I've come late. 'Ave I?'

'You've 'ad all that's good for you,' said Tom Wessels, as the Red Marine sat cross-legged on the floor.

'There are those 'oo haven't 'ad a thing yet!' cried a voice by the door.

'I will take this *Archimandrite*,' I said, 'and this Marine. Will you please give the boat's crew a drink now, and another in half an hour if —if Mr.——'

'Pyecroft,' said the square man. 'Emanuel Pyecroft, second-class petty-officer.'

'—Mr. Pyecroft doesn't object?'

'He don't. Clear out. Goldin', you picket the hill by yourself, throwin' out a skirmishin'-line in ample time to let me know when Number One's comin' down from his vittles.'

The crowd dissolved. We passed into the quiet of the inner bar, the Red Marine zealously leading the way.

'And what do you drink, Mr. Pyecroft?' I said.

'Only water. Warm water, with a little whisky an' sugar an' per'aps a lemon.'

'Mine's beer,' said the Marine. 'It always was.'

'Look 'ere, Glass. You take an' go to sleep. The picket'll be comin' for you in a little time, an' per'aps you'll 'ave slep' it off by then. What's your ship, now?' said Mr. Wessels.

'The Ship o' State—most important?' said the Red Marine magnificently, and shut his eyes.

'That's right,' said Mr. Pyecroft. 'He's safest where he is. An' now—here's santy to us all!—what d'you want o' me?'

'I want to read you something.'

'Tracts again!' said the Marine, never opening his eyes. 'Well. I'm game. . . . A little more 'ead to it, miss, please.'

'He thinks 'e's drinkin'—lucky beggar!' said Mr. Pyecroft. 'I'm agreeable to be read to. 'Twon't alter my convictions. I may as well tell you beforehand I'm a Plymouth Brother.'

He composed his face with the air of one in the dentist's chair, and I began at the third page of 'M. de C.'

'"*At the moment of asphyxiation, for I had hidden myself under the boat's cover, I heard footsteps upon the superstructure and coughed with empress*"—coughed loudly, Mr. Pyecroft. "*By this time I judged the vessel to be sufficiently far from land. A number of sailors extricated me amid language appropriate to their national brutality. I responded that I named myself Antonio, and that I sought to save myself from the Portuguese conscription.*"'

'Ho!' said Mr. Pyecroft, and the fashion of his countenance changed. Then pensively: 'Ther beggar! What might you have in your hand there?'

'It's the story of Antonio—a stowaway in the *Archimandrite's* cutter. A French spy when he's at home, I fancy. What do *you* know about it?'

'An' I thought it was tracts! An' yet some'ow I didn't.' Mr. Pyecroft nodded his head wonderingly. 'Our old man was quite right—so was 'Op—so was I. Ere, Glass!' He kicked the Marine. 'Here's our Antonio 'as written a impromptu book! He *was* a spy all right.'

The Red Marine turned slightly, speaking with the awful precision of the half-drunk. ''As 'e got anythin' in about my 'orrible death an' execution? Ex*cuse* me, but if I open my eyes, I shan't be well. That's where I'm different from *all* other men. Ahem!'

'What about Glass's execution?' demanded Pyecroft.

'The book's in French,' I replied.

'Then it's no good to me.'

'Precisely. Now I want you to tell your story just as it happened. I'll check it by this book. Take a cigar. I know about his being dragged out of the cutter. What I want to know is what was the meaning of all the other things, because they're unusual.'

'They were,' said Mr. Pyecroft with emphasis. 'Lookin' back on it as I set here more an' more I see what an 'ighly unusual affair it was. But it

happened. It transpired in the *Archimandrite*—the ship you can trust. . . . Antonio! Ther beggar!'

'Take your time, Mr. Pyecroft.'

In a few moments we came to it thus—

'The old man was displeased. I don't deny he was quite a little displeased. With the mail-boats trottin' into Madeira every twenty minutes, he didn't see why a lop-eared Portugee had to take liberties with a man-o'-war's first cutter. Any'ow, we couldn't turn ship round for him. We drew him out and took him to our Number One. "Drown 'im," 'e says. "Drown 'im before 'e dirties my fine new decks." But our owner was tender-hearted. "Take him to the galley," 'e says. "Boil 'im! Skin 'im! Cook 'im! Cut 'is bloomin' hair! Take 'is bloomin' number! We'll have him executed at Ascension."

'Retallick, our chief cook, an' a Carth'lic, was the on'y one any way near grateful; bein' short-'anded in the galley. He annexes the blighter by the left ear an' right foot an' sets him to work peelin' potatoes. So then, this Antonio that was avoidin' the conscription——'

'*Sub*scription, you pink-eyed matlow!' said the Marine, with the face of a stone Buddha, and whimpered sadly: 'Pye don't see any fun in it at all.'

'*Con*scription—come to his illegitimate sphere in Her Majesty's Navy, an' it was just then that Old 'Op, our Yeoman of Signals, an' a fastidious joker, made remarks to me about 'is hands.

'"Those 'ands," says 'Op, "properly considered, never done a day's honest labour in their life. Tell me those hands belong to a blighted Portugee manual labourist, and I won't call you a liar, but I'll say you an' the Admiralty are pretty much unique in your statements." 'Op was always a fastidious joker—in his language as much as anything else. He pursued 'is investigations with the eye of an 'awk outside the galley. He knew better than to advance line-head against Retallick, so he attacked *ong eshlong*, speakin' his remarks as much as possible into the breech of the starboard four point seven, an' 'ummin' to 'imself. Our chief cook 'ated 'ummin'. "What's the matter of your bowels?" he says at last, fistin' out the mess-pork agitated like.

'"Don't mind me," says 'Op. "I'm only a mildewed buntin'-tosser," 'e says: "but speakin' for my mess, I do hope," 'e says, "you ain't goin' to boil your Portugee friend's boots along o' that pork you're smellin' so gay!"

'"Boots! Boots! Boots!" says Retallick, an' he run round like a earwig in a alder-stalk. "Boots in the galley," 'e says. "Cook's mate,

cast out an' abolish this cutter-cuddlin' abori*gine's* boots!"

'They was hove overboard in quick time, an' that was what 'Op was lyin' to for. As subsequently transpired.

'"Fine Arab arch to that cutter-cuddler's hinstep," he says to me. "Run your eye over it, Pye," 'e says. "Nails all present an' correct," 'e says. "Bunion on the little toe, too," 'e says; "which comes from wearin' a tight boot. What do *you* think?"

'"Dook in trouble, per'aps," I says. "He ain't got the hang of spud-skinnin'." No more he 'ad. 'E was simply cannibalizin' 'em.

'"I want to know what 'e 'as got the 'ang of," says 'Op, obstructed-like. "Watch 'im," 'e says. "These shoulders were foreign-drilled somewhere."

'When it comes to "Down 'ammicks!" which is our naval way o' goin' to bye-bye, I took particular trouble over Antonio, 'oo had 'is 'ammick 'ove at 'im with general instructions to sling it an' be sugared. In the ensuin' melly I pioneered him to the after-'atch, which is a orifice communicatin' with the after-flat an' similar suites of apartments. He havin' navigated at three-fifths power immejit ahead o' me, *I* wasn't goin' to volunteer any assistance, nor he didn't need it.

'"Mong Jew!" says 'e, sniffin' round. An'

twice more, "Mong Jew!"—which is pure French. Then he slings 'is 'ammick, nips in, an' coils down. "Not bad for a Portugee conscript," I says to myself, casts off the tow, abandons him, and reports to 'Op.

'About three minutes later I'm over'auled by our sub-lootenant, navigatin' under forced draught, with his bearin's 'eated. 'E had the temerity to say I'd instructed our Antonio to sling his carcass in the alleyway, an' 'e was peevish about it. O' course, I prevaricated like 'ell. You get to do that in the service. Nevertheless, to oblige Mr. Ducane, I went an' readjusted Antonio. You may not 'ave ascertained that there are two ways o' comin' out of an 'ammick when it's cut down. Antonio came out t'other way—slidin' 'andsome to his feet. That showed me two things. First, 'e had been in an 'ammick before, an' next, he hadn't been asleep. Then I reproached 'im for goin' to bed where 'e'd been told to go, instead o' standin' by till some one gave him entirely contradictory orders. Which is the essence o' naval discipline.

'In the middle o' this argument the Gunner protrudes his ram-bow from 'is cabin, an' brings it all to an 'urried conclusion with some remarks suitable to 'is piebald warrant-rank. Navigatin' thence under easy steam, an' leavin' Antonio to

re-sling his little foreign self, my large flat foot comes in detonatin' contact with a small objec' on the deck. Not 'altin' for the obstacle, nor changin' step, I shuffles it along under the ball of the big toe to the foot o' the hatchway, when, lightly stoopin', I catch it in my right hand and continue my evolutions in rapid time till I eventuates under 'Op's lee.

'It was a small moroccer-bound pocket-book, full of indelible pencil writin'—in French, for I could plainly discern the *doodeladays*, which is about as far as my education runs.

''Op fists it open and peruses. 'E'd known an 'arf-caste Frenchwoman pretty intricate before he was married; when he was trained man in a stinkin' gunboat up the Saigon River. He understood a lot o' French—domestic brands chiefly—the kind that isn't in print.

'"Pye," he says to me, "you're a tattician o' no mean value. I am a trifle shady about the precise bearin' an' import' o' this beggar's private log here," 'e says, "but it's evidently a case for the owner. You'll 'ave your share o' the credit," 'e says.

'"Nay, nay, Pauline," I says. "You don't catch Emanuel Pyecroft mine-droppin' under any post-captain's bows," I says, "in search of honour," I says. "I've been there oft."

'"Well, if you must, you must," 'e says, takin' me up quick. "But I'll speak a good word for you, Pye."

'"You'll shut your mouth, 'Op," I says, "or you an' me'll part brass-rags. The owner has his duties, an' I have mine. We will keep station," I says, "nor seek to deviate."

'"Deviate to blazes!" says 'Op. "I'm goin' to deviate to the owner's comfortable cabin direct." So he deviated.'

Mr. Pyecroft leaned forward and dealt the Marine a large-pattern Navy kick. ''Ere, Glass! You was sentry when 'Op went to the old man—the first time, with Antonio's washin'-book. Tell us what transpired. You're sober. You don't know how sober you are!'

The Marine cautiously raised his head a few inches. As Mr. Pyecroft said, he was sober—after some R.M.L.I. fashion of his own devising. ''Op bounds in like a startled anteloper, carryin' 'is signal-slate at the ready. The old man was settin' down to 'is bountiful platter—not like you an' me, without anythin' more in sight for an 'ole night an' 'arf a day. Talkin' about food——'

'No! No! No!' cried Pyecroft, kicking again. 'What about 'Op?' I thought the Marine's ribs would have snapped, but he merely hiccupped.

'Oh, 'im! 'E 'ad it written all down on 'is little slate—I think—an' 'e shoves it under the old man's nose. "Shut the door," says 'Op. "For 'Eavin's sake shut the cabin door!" Then the old man must ha' said somethin' 'bout irons. "I'll put 'em on, Sir, in your very presence," says 'Op, "only 'ear my prayer," or—words to that 'fect. . . . It was jus' the same with me when I called our Sergeant a bladder-bellied, lard-'eaded, perspirin' pension-cheater. They on'y put on the charge-sheet "words to that effect." Spoiled the 'ole 'fect."

"'Op! 'Op! 'Op! What about 'Op?' thundered Pyecroft.

"'Op? Oh, shame thing. Words t' that 'fect. Door shut. Nushin' more transhpired till 'Op comes out—nose exshtreme angle plungin' fire or—or words 'that effect. Proud's parrot. "Oh, you prou' old parrot," I says.'

Mr. Glass seemed to slumber again.

'Lord! How a little moisture disintegrates, don't it? When we had ship's theatricals off Vigo, Glass 'ere played Dick Deadeye to the moral, though of course the lower deck wasn't pleased to see a leather-neck interpretin' a strictly maritime part, as you might say. It's only his repartees, which 'e can't contain, that conquers him. Shall I resume my narrative?'

Another drink was brought on this hint, and Mr. Pyecroft resumed.

'The essence o' strategy bein' forethought, the essence o' tattics is surprise. Per'aps you didn't know that? My forethought 'avin' secured the initial advantage in attack, it remained for the old man to ladle out the surprise-packets. 'Eavens! What surprises! That night he dines with the wardroom, bein' of the kind—I've told you as we were a 'appy ship?—that likes it, and the wardroom liked it too. This ain't common in the service. They had up the new Madeira—awful undisciplined stuff which gives you a cordite mouth next morning. They told the mess-men to navigate towards the extreme an' remote 'orizon, an' they abrogated the sentry about fifteen paces out of earshot. Then they had in the Gunner, the Bo'sun, an' the Carpenter, an' stood them large round drinks. It all come out later—wardroom joints bein' lower-deck hash, as the sayin' is—that our Number One stuck to it that 'e couldn't trust the ship for the job. The old man swore 'e could, 'avin' commanded 'er over two years. He was right. There wasn't a ship, I don't care in what fleet, could come near the *Archimandrites* when we give our mind to a thing. We held the cruiser big-gun record, the sailing-cutter (fancy-rig) championship, an' the challenge-

cup row round the fleet. We 'ad the best nigger minstrels, the best football an' cricket teams, an' the best squee-jee band of anything that ever pushed in front of a brace o' screws. An' *yet* our Number One mistrusted us! 'E said we'd be a floatin' hell in a week, an' it 'ud take the rest o' the commission to stop our way. They was arguin' it in the wardroom when the bridge reports a light three points off the port bow. We overtakes her, switches on our search-light, an' she discloses herself as a collier o' no mean reputation, makin' about seven knots on 'er lawful occasions —to the Cape most like.

'Then the owner—so we 'eard in good time—broke the boom, springin' all mines together at close interval.

'"Look 'ere, my jokers," 'e says (I'm givin' the grist of 'is arguments, remember), "Number One says we can't enlighten this cutter-cuddlin' Gaulish lootenant on the manners an' customs o' the Navy without makin' the ship a market-garden. There's a lot in that," 'e says, "specially if we kept it up lavish, till we reached Ascension. But," 'e says, "the appearance o' this strange sail has put a totally new aspect on the game. We can run to just one day's amusement for our friend, or else what's the good o' discipline? An' then we can turn 'im over to our presumably short-

'anded fellow-subject in the small-coal line out yonder. He'll be pleased," says the old man, "an' so will Antonio. M'rover," he says to Number One, "I'll lay you a dozen o' liquorice an' ink"—it must ha' been that new tawny port—"that I've got a ship I can trust—for one day," 'e says. "Wherefore," he says, "will you have the extreme goodness to reduce speed as requisite for keepin' a proper distance behind this providential tramp till further orders?" Now, that's what I call tattics.

'The other manœuvres developed next day, strictly in accordance with the plans as laid down in the wardroom, where they sat long an' steady. 'Op whispers to me that Antonio was a Number One spy when 'e was in commission, and a French lootenant when 'e was paid off, so I navigated at three 'undred and ninety-six revolutions to the galley, never 'avin' kicked a lootenant up to date. I may as well say that I did not manœuvre against 'im as a Frenchman, because I like Frenchmen, but stric'ly on 'is rank an' ratin' in 'is own navy. I inquired after 'is health from Retallick.

'"Don't ask me," 'e says, sneerin' be'ind his silver spectacles. "'E's promoted to be captain's second supernumerary servant, to be dressed and addressed as such. If 'e does 'is dooties same as

he skinned the spuds, *I* ain't for changin' with the old man."

'In the balmy dawnin' it was given out, all among the 'olystones, by our sub-lootenant, who was a three-way-discharge devil, that all orders after eight bells was to be executed in inverse ration to the cube o' the velocity. "The reg'lar routine," he says, "was arrogated for reasons o' state an' policy, an' any flat-foot who presumed to exhibit surprise, annoyance, or amusement, would be slightly but firmly reproached." Then the Gunner mops up a heathenish large detail for some hanky-panky in the magazines, an' led 'em off along with our Gunnery Jack, which is to say, our Gunnery Lootenant.

'That put us on the *viva voce*—particularly when we understood how the owner was navigatin' abroad in his sword-belt trustin' us like brothers. We shifts into the dress o' the day, an' we musters, *an'* we prays *ong reggle*, an' we carries on anticipatory to bafflin' Antonio.

'Then our Sergeant of Marines come to me wringin' his 'ands an' weepin'. 'E'd been talkin' to the sub-lootenant, an' it looked like as if his upper-works were collapsin'.

'"I want a guarantee," 'e says, wringin' 'is 'ands like this. "*I* 'aven't 'ad sunstroke slave-dhowin' in Tajurrah Bay, an' been compelled to

live on quinine an' chlorodyne ever since. *I* don't get the horrors off two glasses o' brown sherry."

'"What 'ave you got now?" I says.

'"*I* ain't an officer," 'e says. "*My* sword won't be handed back to me at the end o' the court-martial on account o' my little weaknesses, an' no stain on my character. I'm only a pore beggar of a Red Marine with eighteen years' service, an' why for," says he, wringin' 'is hands like this all the time, "must I chuck away my pension, sub-lootenant or no sub-lootenant? Look at 'em," he says, "only look at 'em. Marines fallin' in for small-arm drill!"

'The leather-necks was layin' aft at the double, an' a more insanitary set of accidents I never wish to behold. Most of 'em was in their shirts. They had their trousers on, of course—rolled up nearly to the knee, but what I mean is belts over shirts. Three or four 'ad *our* caps, an' them that had drawn helmets wore their chin-straps like Portugee earrings. Oh, yes; an' three of 'em 'ad only one boot! I knew what our bafflin' tattics was goin' to be, but even I was mildly surprised when this gay fantasia of Brazee drummers halted under the poop, because of an 'ammick in charge of our Navigator, an' a small but 'ighly efficient landin'-party.

'"'Ard astern both screws!" says the Navi-

gator. "Room for the captain's 'ammick!" The captain's servant—Cockburn 'is name was—had one end, an' our newly promoted Antonio, in a blue slop rig, 'ad the other. They slung it from the muzzle of the port poop quick-firer thort-ships to a stanchion. Then the old man flickered up, smokin' a cigarette, an' brought 'is stern to an anchor slow an' oriental.

'"What a blessin' it is, Mr. Ducane," 'e says to our sub-lootenant, "to be out o' sight o' the 'ole pack o' blighted admirals! What's an admiral after all?" 'e says. "Why, 'e's only a post-captain with the pip, Mr. Ducane. The drill will now proceed. What O! Antonio, *descendez* an' get me a split."

'When Antonio came back with the whisky-an'-soda, he was told off to swing the 'ammick in slow time, an' that massacritin' small-arm party went on with their oratorio. The Sergeant had been kindly excused from participatin', an' he was jumpin' round on the poop-ladder, stretchin' 'is leather neck to see the disgustin' exhibition an' cluckin' like a ash-hoist. A lot of us went on the fore-an'-aft bridge an' watched 'em like "Listen to the Band in the Park." All these evolutions, I may as well tell you, are highly unusual in the Navy. After ten minutes o' muckin' about, Glass 'ere—pity 'e's so drunk!—says that 'e'd had

enough exercise for 'is simple needs an' he wants to go 'ome. Mr. Ducane catches him a sanaka-towzer of a smite over the 'ead with the flat of his sword. Down comes Glass's rifle with language to correspond, and he fiddles with the bolt. Up jumps Maclean—'oo was a Gosport 'ighlander—an' lands on Glass's neck, thus bringin' him to the deck, fully extended.

'The old man makes a great show o' wakin' up from sweet slumbers. "Mistah Ducane," he says, "what is this painful interregnum?" or words to that effect. Ducane takes one step to the front, an' salutes: "Only 'nother case of attempted assassination, Sir," he says.

'"Is that all?" says the old man, while Maclean sits on Glass's collar button. "Take him away," 'e says; "he knows the penalty."'

'Ah! I suppose that is the "invincible *morgue* Britannic in the presence of brutally provoked mutiny,"' I muttered, as I turned over the pages of M. de C.

'So, Glass, 'e was led off kickin' an' squealin', an' hove down the ladder into 'is Sergeant's volupshus arms. 'E run Glass forward, an' was all for puttin' 'im in irons as a maniac.

'"You refill your waterjacket and cool off!" says Glass, sittin' down rather winded. "The trouble with you is you haven't any imagination."

'"Haven't I? I've got the remnants of a little poor authority though," 'e says, lookin' pretty vicious.

'"You 'ave?" says Glass. "Then for pity's sake 'ave some proper feelin' too. I'm goin' to be shot this evenin'. You'll take charge o' the firin'-party."

'"Some'ow or other, that made the Sergeant froth at the mouth. 'E 'ad no more play to his intellects than a spit-kid. 'E just took everything as it come. Well, that was about all, I think. . . . Unless you'd care to have me resume my narrative.'

We resumed on the old terms, but with rather less hot water. The marine on the floor breathed evenly, and Mr. Pyecroft nodded.

'I may have omitted to inform you that our Number One took a general row round the situation while the small-arm party was at work, an' o' course he supplied the outlines; but the details we coloured in by ourselves. These were our tattics to baffle Antonio. It occurs to the Carpenter to 'ave the steam-cutter down for repairs. 'E gets 'is cheero-party together, an' down she comes. You've never seen a steam-cutter let down on the deck, 'ave you? It's not usual, an' she takes a lot o' humourin'. Thus we 'ave the starboard side completely blocked an' the general

traffic tricklin' over'ead along the fore-an'-aft bridge. Then Chips gets into her an' begins balin' out a mess o' small reckonin's on the deck. Simultaneous there come up three o' those dirty engine-room objects which we call "tiffies," an' a stoker or two with orders to repair her steamin'-gadgets. *They* get into her an' bale out another young Christmas-treeful of small reckonin's—brass mostly. Simultaneous it hits the Pusser that 'e'd better serve out mess pork for the poor matlow. These things half shifted Retallick, our chief cook, off 'is bed-plate. Yes, you might say they broke 'im wide open. 'E wasn't at all used to 'em.

'Number One tells off five or six prime, able-bodied seamen-gunners to the pork barrels. You never see pork fisted out of its receptacle, 'ave you? Simultaneous, it hits the Gunner that now's the day an' now's the hour for a non-continuous class in Maxim instruction. So they all give way together, and the general effect was *non plus ultra*. There was the cutter's innards spread out like a Fratton pawnbroker's shop; there was the "tiffies" hammerin' in the stern of 'er, an' *they* ain't anti-septic; there was the Maxim-class in light skirmishin' order among the pork, an' forrard the blacksmith had 'is forge in full blast, makin' 'orse-shoes, I suppose. Well, that accounts for

the starboard side. The on'y warrant officer 'oo hadn't a look in so far was the Bosun. So 'e stated, all out of 'is own 'ead, that Chip's reserve o' wood an' timber, which Chips 'ad stole at our last refit, needed restowin'. It was on the port booms—a young an' healthy forest of it, for Charley Peace wasn't to be named 'longside 'o Chips for burglary.

'"All right," says our Number One. "You can 'ave the whole port watch if you like. Hell's Hell," 'e says, "an' when there study to improve."

'Jarvis was our Bosun's name. He hunted up the 'ole of the port watch by hand, as you might say, callin' 'em by name loud an' lovin', which is not precisely Navy makee-pigeon. They 'ad that timber-loft off the booms, an' they dragged it up and down like so many sweatin' little beavers. But Jarvis was jealous o' Chips an' went round the starboard side to envy at him.

'"Tain't enough," 'e says, when he had climbed back. "Chips 'as got his bazaar lookin' like a coal-hulk in a cyclone. We must adop' more drastic measures." Off 'e goes to Number One and communicates with 'im. Number One got the old man's leave, on account of our goin' so slow (we were keepin' be'ind the tramp), to fit the ship with a full set of patent supernumerary sails. Four trysails—yes, you might call 'em trysails—

was our Admiralty allowance in the un'eard-of event of a cruiser breakin' down, but we had our awnin's as well. They was all extricated from the various flats an' 'oles where they was stored, an' at the end o' two hours' hard work Number One 'e made out eleven sails o' different sorts and sizes. I don't know what exact nature of sail you'd call 'em—pyjama-stun'sles with a touch of Sarah's shimmy, per'aps—but the riggin' of 'em an' all the supernumerary details, as you might say, bein' carried on through an' over an' between the cutter an' the forge an' the pork an' cleanin' guns, an' the Maxim class an' the Bosun's calaboose *and* the paintwork, was sublime. There's no other word for it. Sub-lime!

'The old man keeps swimmin' up' an' down through it all with the faithful Antonio at 'is side, fetchin' him numerous splits. 'E had eight that mornin', an' when Antonio was detached to get 'is spy-glass, or his gloves, or his lily-white 'and-kerchief, the old man would waste 'em down a ventilator. Antonio must ha' learned a lot about our Navy thirst.'

'He did.'

'Ah! Would you kindly mind turnin' to the precise page indicated an' givin' me a *résumé* of 'is tattics?' said Mr. Pyecroft, drinking deeply. 'I'd like to know 'ow it looked from 'is side o' the deck.'

'How will this do?' I said. '"*Once clear of the land, like Voltaire's Habakkuk——*"'

'One o' their new commerce-destroyers, I suppose,' Mr. Pyecroft interjected.

'"*—each man seemed veritably capable of all—to do according to his will. The boats, dismantled and forlorn, are lowered upon the planking. One cries 'Aid me!' flourishing at the same time the weapons of his business. A dozen launch themselves upon him in the orgasm of zeal misdirected. He beats them off with the howlings of dogs. He has lost a hammer. This ferocious outcry signifies that only. Eight men seek the utensil, colliding on the way with some many others which, seated in the stern of the boat, tear up and scatter upon the planking the ironwork which impedes their brutal efforts. Elsewhere, one detaches from on high wood, canvas, iron bolts, coal-dust—what do I know?*"'

'That's where 'e's comin' the bloomin' *onjenew*. 'E knows a lot, reely.'

'"*They descend thundering upon the planking, and the spectacle cannot reproduce itself. In my capacity of valet to the captain, whom I have well and beautifully plied with drink since the rising of the sun (behold me also, Ganymede!), I pass throughout observing, it may be not a little. They ask orders. There is none to give them. One sits upon the edge of the vessel and chants interminably the*

lugubrious 'Roule Britannia'—to endure how long?"'

'That was me! On'y 'twas "A Life on the Ocean Wave"—which I hate more than any stinkin' tune I know, havin' dragged too many nasty little guns to it. Yes, Number One told me off to that for ten minutes; an' I ain't musical, you might say."

'"Then come marines, half-dressed, seeking vainly through this 'tohu-bohu'" (that's one of his names for the *Archimandrite*, Mr. Pyecroft) *"for a place whence they shall not be dislodged. The captain, heavy with drink, rolls himself from his hammock. He would have his people fire the Maxims. They demand which Maxim. That to him is equal. The breech-lock indispensable is not there. They demand it of one who opens a barrel of pork, for this Navy feeds at all hours. He refers them to the cook, yesterday my master——"'*

'Yes, an' Rettalick nearly had a fit. What a truthful an' observin' little Antonio we 'ave!'

'"It is discovered in the hands of a boy who says, and they do not rebuke him, that he has found it by hazard." I'm afraid I haven't translated quite correctly, Mr. Pyecroft, but I've done my best.'

'Why, it's beautiful—you ought to be a Frenchman—you ought. You don't want anything o' *me*. You've got it all there.'

'Yes, but I like your side of it. For instance. Here's a little thing I can't quite see the end of. Listen! "*Of the domain which Britannia rules by sufferance, my gross captain knew nothing, and his Navigator, if possible, less. From the bestial recriminations and the indeterminate chaos of the grand deck, I ascended—always with a whisky-and-soda in my hands—to a scene truly grotesque. Behold my captain in plain sea, at issue with his Navigator! A crisis of nerves due to the enormous quantity of alcohol which he had swallowed up to then, has filled for him the ocean with dangers, imaginary and fantastic. Incapable of judgment, menaced by the phantasms of his brain inflamed, he envisages islands perhaps of the Hesperides beneath his keel—vigias innumerable.*" I don't know what a vigia is, Mr. Pyecroft. "*He creates shoals sad and far-reaching of the mid-Atlantic!*" What was that, now?'

'Oh, I see! That come after dinner, when our Navigator threw 'is cap down an' danced on it. Danby was quartermaster. They 'ad a tea-party on the bridge. It was the old man's contribution. Does he say anything about the leadsmen?'

'Is this it? "*Overborne by his superior's causeless suspicion, the Navigator took off the badges of his rank and cast them at the feet of my captain and sobbed. A disgusting and maudlin reconciliation followed. The argument renewed itself, each*

grasping the wheel, crapulous" (that means drunk, I think, Mr. Pyecroft), *"shouting. It appeared that my captain would chenaler"* (I don't know what that means, Mr. Pyecroft) *"to the Cape. At the end, he placed a sailor with the sound"* (that's the lead, I think) *"in his hand, garnished with suet."* Was it garnished with suet?'

'He put two leadsmen in the chains, o' course! He didn't know that there mightn't be shoals there, 'e said. Morgan went an' armed his lead, to enter into the spirit o' the thing. They 'eaved it for twenty minutes, but there wasn't any suet—only tallow, o' course.'

'"*Garnished with suet at two thousand metres of profundity. Decidedly the Britannic Navy is well guarded.*" Well, that's all right, Mr. Pyecroft. Would you mind telling me anything else of interest that happened?'

'There was a good deal, one way an' another. I'd like to know what this Antonio thought of our sails.'

'He merely says that "*the engines having broken down, an officer extemporised a mournful and useless parody of sails.*" Oh, yes! he says that some of them looked like "*bonnets in a needlecase,*" I think.'

'Bonnets in a needlecase! They were stun'sles. That shows the beggar's no sailor. That trick

was really the one thing we did. Pho! I thought he was a sailorman, an' 'e hasn't sense enough to see what extemporisin' eleven good an' drawin' sails out o' four trys'les an' a few awnin's means. 'E must have been drunk!'

'Never mind, Mr. Pyecroft. I want to hear about your target-practice, and the execution.'

'Oh! We had a special target-practice that afternoon all for Antonio. As I told my crew—me bein' captain of the port-bow quick-firer, though I'm a torpedo man now—it just showed how you can work your gun under any discomforts. A shell—twenty six-inch shells—burstin' inboard couldn't 'ave begun to make the varicose collection o' tit-bits which we had spilled on our deck. It was a lather—a rich, creamy lather!

'We took it very easy—that gun-practice. We did it in a complimentary "Jenny-'ave-another-cup-o'-tea" style, an' the crews was strictly ordered not to rupture 'emselves with unnecessary exertion. This isn't our custom in the Navy when we're *in puris naturalibus*, as you might say. But we wasn't so then. We was impromptu. An' Antonio was busy fetchin' splits for the old man, and the old man was wastin' 'em down the ventilators. There must 'ave been four inches in the bilges, I should think—wardroom whisky-an'-soda.

'Then I thought I might as well bear a hand as

look pretty. So I let my *bundoop* go at fifteen 'undred—sightin' very particular. There was a sort of 'appy little belch like—no more, I give you my word—an' the shell trundled out maybe fifty feet an' dropped into the deep Atlantic.

'"Government powder, Sir!" sings out our Gunnery Jack to the bridge, laughin' horrid sarcastic; an' then, of course, we all laughs, which we are not encouraged to do *in puris naturalibus*. Then, of course, I saw what our Gunnery Jack 'ad been after with his subcutaneous details in the magazines all the mornin' watch. He had redooced the charges to a minimum, as you might say. But it made me feel a trifle faint an' sickish notwithstandin', this spit-in-the-eye business. Every time such transpired, our Gunnery Lootenant would say somethin' sarcastic about Government stores, an' the old man fair howled. 'Op was on the bridge with 'im, an' 'e told me—'cause he's a free-knowledge-ist an' reads character—that Antonio's face was sweatin' with pure joy. 'Op wanted to kick him. Does Antonio say anything about that?'

'Not about the kicking, but he is great on the gun-practice, Mr. Pyecroft. He has put all the results into a sort of appendix—a table of shots. He says that the figures will speak more eloquently than words.'

'What? Nothin' about the way the crews

flinched an' hopped? Nothin' about the little shells rumblin' out o' the guns so casual?'

'There are a few pages of notes, but they only bear out what you say. He says that these things always happen as soon as one of our ships is out of sight of land. Oh, yes! I've forgotten. He says, "*From the conversation of my captain with his inferiors I gathered that no small proportion of the expense of these nominally efficient cartridges finds itself in his pockets. So much, indeed, was signified by an officer on the deck below, who cried in a high voice: 'I hope, Sir, you are making something out of it. It is rather monotonous.' This insult, so flagrant, albeit well merited, was received with a smile of drunken bonhommy*"—that's cheerfulness, Mr. Pyecroft. Your glass is empty.'

'Resumin' afresh,' said Mr. Pyecroft, after a well-watered interval, 'I may as well say that the target-practice occupied us two hours, and then we had to dig out after the tramp. Then we half an' three-quarters cleaned up the decks an' mucked about as requisite, haulin' down the patent awnin' stun'sles which Number One 'ad made. The old man was a shade doubtful of his course, 'cause I 'eard him say to Number One, "You were right. A week o' this would turn the ship into a Hayti bean-feast. But," he says pathetic, "haven't they backed the band noble?"

'"Oh! it's a picnic for them," says Number One. "But when do we get rid o' this whisky-peddlin' blighter o' yours, Sir?"

'"That's a cheerful way to speak of a *Vis*count," says the old man. "'E's the bluest blood o' France when he's at home."

'"Which is the precise landfall I wish 'im to make," says Number One. "It'll take all 'ands and the Captain of the Head to clean up after 'im."

'"They won't grudge it," says the old man. "Just as soon as it's dusk we'll overhaul our tramp friend an' waft him over."

'Then a sno—midshipman—Moorshed was 'is name—come up an' says somethin' in a low voice. It fetches the old man.

'"You'll oblige me," 'e says, "by takin' the wardroom poultry for *that*. I've ear-marked every fowl we've shipped at Madeira, so there can't be any possible mistake. M'rover," 'e says, "tell 'em if they spill one drop of blood on the deck," he says, "they'll not be extenuated, but hung."

'Mr. Moorshed goes forward, lookin' unusual 'appy, even for him. The Marines was enjoyin' a committee-meetin' in their own flat.

'After that, it fell dark, with just a little streaky, oily light on the sea—an' anythin' more chronic

than the *Archimandrite* I'd trouble you to behold. She looked like a fancy bazaar and a auction-room—yes, she almost looked like a passenger-steamer. We'd picked up our tramp, an' was about four mile be'ind 'er. I noticed the ward-room as a class, you might say, was manœuvrin' *en masse*, an' then come the order, to cockbill the yards. We hadn't any yards except a couple o' signallin' sticks, but we cock-billed 'em. I hadn't seen that sight, not since thirteen years in the West Indies, when a post-captain died o' yellow jack. It means a sign o' mournin', the yards bein' canted opposite ways, to look drunk an' dis-orderly. They do.

'"An' what might our last giddy-go-round signify?" I asks of 'Op.

'"Good 'Evins!" 'e says, "are you in the habit o' permittin' leather-necks to assassinate lootenants every morning at drill without immejitly 'avin' 'em shot on the foc'sle in the horrid crawly-crawly twilight?"'

'Yes,' I murmured over my dear book, '"*the infinitely lugubrious crepuscule. A spectacle of barbarity unparalleled—hideous—cold-blooded, and yet touched with appalling grandeur.*"'

'Ho! Was that the way Antonio looked at it? That shows he 'ad feelin's. To resoom. Without anyone givin' us orders to that effect, we

began to creep about an' whisper. Things got stiller and stiller, till they was as still as—mushrooms! Then the bugler let off the "Dead March" from the upper bridge. He done it to cover the remarks of a cock-bird bein' killed forrard, but it came out paralysin' in its *tout ensemble*. You never heard the "Dead March" on a bugle? Then the pipes went twitterin' for both watches to attend public execution, an' we came up like so many ghosts, the 'ole ship's company. Why, Mucky 'Arcourt, one o' our boys, was that took in he give tongue like a beagle-pup, an' was properly kicked down the ladder for so doin'. Well, there we lay—engines stopped, rollin' to the swell, all dark, yards cock-billed, an' that merry tune yowlin' from the upper bridge. We fell in on the foc'sle, leavin' a large open space by the capstan, where our sail-maker was sittin' sewin' broken firebars into the foot of an old 'ammick. 'E looked like a corpse, an' Mucky had another fit o' hysterics, an' you could 'ear us breathin' 'ard. It beat anythin' in the theatrical line that even us *Archimandrites* had done—an' we was the ship you could trust. Then come the doctor an' lit a red lamp which he used for his photographic muckin's, an' chocked it on the capstan. That was finally gashly!

'Then come twelve Marines guardin' Glass 'ere. You wouldn't think to see 'im what a gratooitous

an' aboundin' terror he was that evenin'. 'E was in a white shirt 'e'd stole from Cockburn, an' his regulation trousers, bare-footed. 'E'd pipe-clayed 'is 'ands an' face an' feet an' as much of his chest as the openin' of his shirt showed. 'E marched under escort with a firm an' undeviatin' step to the capstan, an' came to attention. The old man, reinforced by an extra strong split—his seventeenth, an' 'e didn't throw *that* down the ventilator—come up on the bridge an' stood like a image. 'Op, 'oo was with 'im, says that 'e heard Antonio's teeth singin', not chatterin'—singin' like funnel-stays in a typhoon. Yes, a moanin' æolian harp, 'Op said.

'"When you are ready, Sir, drop your 'andkerchief," Number One whispers.

'"Good Lord!" says the old man, with a jump. "Eh! What? What a sight! What a sight!" an' he stood drinkin' it in, I suppose, for quite two minutes.

'Glass never says a word. 'E shoved aside an 'andkerchief which the sub-lootenant proffered 'im to bind 'is eyes with—quiet an' collected; an' if we 'adn't been feelin' so very much as we did feel, his gestures would 'ave brought down the 'ouse.'

'I can't open my eyes, or I'll be sick,' said the Marine with appalling clearness. 'I'm pretty far gone—I know it—but there wasn't anyone could 'ave beaten Edwardo Glass, R.M.L.I., that time.

Why, I scared myself nearly into the 'orrors. Go on, Pye. Glass is in support—as ever.'

'Then the old man drops 'is 'andkerchief, an' the firin'-party fires like one man. Glass drops forward, twitchin' an' 'eavin' horrid natural, into the shotted 'ammick all spread out before 'im, and the firin' party closes in to guard the remains of the deceased while Sails is stitchin' it up. An' when they lifted that 'ammick it was one wringin' mess o' blood! They on'y expended one wardroom cock-bird, too. Did you know poultry bled that extravagant? *I* never did.

'The old man—so 'Op told me—stayed on the bridge, brought up on a dead centre. Number One was similarly, though lesser, impressed, but o' course 'is duty was to think of 'is fine white decks an' the blood. "Arf a mo', Sir," he says, when the old man was for leavin'. "We have to wait for the burial, which I am informed takes place immejit."

'"It's beyond me," says the owner. "There was general instructions for an execution, but I never knew I had such a dependable push of mountebanks aboard," he says. "I'm all cold up my back, still."

'The Marines carried the corpse below. Then the bugle give us some more "Dead March." Then we 'eard a splash from a bow six-pounder port, an' the bugle struck up a cheerful tune. The

whole lower deck was complimentin' Glass, 'oo took it very meek. 'E *is* a good actor, for all 'e's a leather-neck.

'"Now," said the old man, "we must turn over Antonio. He's in what I have 'eard called one perspirin' funk."

'Of course, I'm tellin' it slow, but it all 'appened much quicker. We run down our trampo—without o' course informin' Antonio of 'is 'appy destiny—an' inquired of 'er if she had any use for a free and gratis stowaway. Oh, yes! she said she'd be highly grateful, but she seemed a shade puzzled at our generosity, as you might put it, an' we lay by till she lowered a boat. Then Antonio—who was un'appy, distinctly un'appy—was politely requested to navigate elsewhere, which I don't think he looked for. 'Op was deputed to convey the information, an' 'Op got in one sixteen-inch kick which 'oisted 'im all up the ladder. 'Op ain't really vindictive, an' 'e's fond of the French, especially the women, but his chances o' kicking lootenants was like the cartridge—reduced to a minimum.

'The boat 'adn't more than shoved off before a change, as you might say, came o'er the spirit of our dream. The old man says, like Elphinstone an' Bruce in the Portsmouth election when I was a boy: "Gentlemen," he says, "for gentlemen you have shown yourselves to be—from the bottom of

my heart I thank you. The status an' position of our late lamented shipmate made it obligato," 'e says, "to take certain steps not strictly included in the regulations An' nobly," says 'e, "have you assisted me. Now," 'e says, "you hold the false and felonious reputation of bein' the smartest ship in the Service. Pigsties," 'e says, "is plane trigonometry alongside our present disgustin' state. Efface the effects of this indecent orgy," he says. "Jump, you lop-eared, flat-footed, butter-backed Amalekites! Dig out, you briny-eyed beggars!"

'Do captains talk like that in the Navy, Mr. Pyecroft?' I asked.

'I've told you once I only give the grist of his arguments. The Bosun's mate translates it to the lower deck, as you may put it, and the lower deck springs smartly to attention. It took us half the night 'fore we got 'er anyway ship-shape; but by sunrise she was beautiful as ever, an' we resoomed. I've thought it over a lot since; yes, an' I've thought a lot of Antonio trimmin' coal in that tramp's bunkers. 'E must 'ave been highly surprised. Wasn't he?'

'He was, Mr. Pyecroft,' I responded. 'But now we're talkin' of it, weren't you all a little surprised?'

'It come as a pleasant relief to the regular routine,' said Mr. Pyecroft. 'We appreciated it as an easy way o' workin' for your country.

But—the old man was right—a week o' similar manœuvres would 'ave knocked our moral double-bottoms bung out. Now, couldn't you oblige with Antonio's account of Glass's execution?'

I obliged for nearly ten minutes. It was at best but a feeble rendering of M. de C.'s magnificent prose, through which the soul of the poet, the eye of the mariner, and the heart of the patriot bore magnificent accord. His account of his descent from the side of the '*infamous vessel consecrated to blood*' in the '*vast and gathering dusk of the trembling ocean*' could only be matched by his description of the dishonoured hammock sinking unnoticed through the depths, while, above, the bugler played music '*of an indefinable brutality.*'

'By the way, what did the bugler play after Glass's funeral?' I asked.

'Him? Oh! 'e played "The Strict Q.T." It's a very old song. We 'ad it in Fratton nearly fifteen years back,' said Mr. Pyecroft sleepily.

I stirred the sugar dregs in my glass. Suddenly entered armed men, wet and discourteous, Tom Wessels smiling nervously in the background.

'Where is that—minutely particularised person—Glass?' said the sergeant of the picket.

''Ere!' The marine rose to the strictest of attentions. 'An' it's no good smellin' of my breath, because I'm strictly an' ruinously sober.'

'Oh! An' what may you have been doin' with yourself?'

'Listenin' to tracts. You can look! I've 'ad the evenin' of my little life. Lead on to the *Cornucopia's* midmost dunjing-cell. There's a crowd of brass-'atted blighters there which will say I've been absent without leaf. Never mind. I forgive 'em before'and. *The* evenin' of my life, an' please don't forget it.' Then in a tone of most ingratiating apology to me: 'I soaked it all in be'ind my shut eyes. 'Im'—he jerked a contemptuous thumb towards Mr. Pyecroft—''e's a flat-foot, a indigo-blue matlow. 'E never saw the fun from first to last. A mournful beggar—most depressin'.' Private Glass departed, leaning heavily on the escort's arm.

Mr. Pyecroft wrinkled his brows in thought—the profound and far-reaching meditation that follows five glasses of hot whisky-and-water.

'Well, I don't see anything comical—greatly—except here an' there. Specially about those redooced charges in the guns. Do *you* see anything funny in it?'

There was that in his eye which warned me the night was too wet for argument.

'No, Mr. Pyecroft, I don't,' I replied. 'It was a beautiful tale, and I thank you very much.'

A SAHIBS' WAR

THE RUNNERS

News!
What is the word that they tell now—now—now!
The little drums beating in the bazaars?
They beat (among the buyers and the sellers)
'Nimrud—ah Nimrud!
God sends a gnat against Nimrud!'
Watchers, O Watchers a thousand!

News!
At the edge of the crops—now—now—where the well-wheels are halted,
One prepares to loose the bullocks and one scrapes his hoe,
They beat (among the sowers and the reapers)
'Nimrud—ah Nimrud!
God prepares an ill day for Nimrud!
Watchers, O Watchers ten thousand.

News!
By the fires of the camps—now—now—where the travellers meet
Where the camels come in and the horses: their men conferring,
They beat (among the packmen and the drivers)
'Nimrud—ah Nimrud!
Thus it befell last noon to Nimrud!'
Watchers, O Watchers an hundred thousand!

TRAFFICS AND DISCOVERIES

News!

Under the shadow of the border-peels—now—now—now!
In the rocks of the passes where the expectant shoe their horses
They beat (among the rifles and the riders)
'Nimrud—ah Nimrud!
Shall we go up against Nimrud?'
Watchers, O Watchers a thousand thousand!

News!

Bring out the heaps of grain—open the account-books again!
Drive forward the well-bullocks against the taxable harvest!
Eat and lie under the trees—pitch the police-guarded fair-grounds, O dancers!
Hide away the rifles and let down the ladders from the watch-towers!
They beat (among all the peoples)
'Now—now—now!
God has reserved the Sword for Nimrud!
God has given Victory to Nimrud!
Let us abide under Nimrud!'
O Well-disposed and Heedful, an hundred thousand thousand!

A SAHIBS' WAR

PASS? Pass? Pass? I have one pass already, allowing me to go by the *rêl* from Kroonstadt to Eshtellenbosch, where the horses are, where I am to be paid off, and whence I return to India. I am a—trooper of the Gurgaon Rissala (cavalry regiment), the One Hundred and Forty-first Punjab Cavalry. Do not herd me with these black Kaffirs. I am a Sikh—a trooper of the State. The Lieutenant-Sahib does not understand my talk? Is there *any* Sahib on this train who will interpret for a trooper of the Gurgaon Rissala going about his business in this devil's devising of a country, where there is no flour, no oil, no spice, no red pepper, and no respect paid to a Sikh? Is there no help? . . . God be thanked, here is such a Sahib! Protector of the Poor! Heaven-born! Tell the young Lieutenant-Sahib that my name is Umr Singh; I am—I was servant to Kurban Sahib, now dead; and I have a pass to go to

Eshtellenbosch, where the horses are. Do not let him herd me with these black Kaffirs! . . . Yes, I will sit by this truck till the Heaven-born has explained the matter to the young Lieutenant-Sahib who does not understand our tongue.

. . . . . .

What orders? The young Lieutenant-Sahib will not detain me? Good! I go down to Eshtellenbosch by the next *terain*? Good! I go with the Heaven-born? Good! Then for this day I am the Heaven-born's servant. Will the Heaven-born bring the honour of his presence to a seat? Here is an empty truck; I will spread my blanket over one corner thus—for the sun is hot, though not so hot as our Punjab in May. I will prop it up thus, and I will arrange this hay thus, so the Presence can sit at ease till God sends us a *terain* for Eshtellenbosch. . . .

The Presence knows the Punjab? Lahore? Amritzar? Attaree, belike? My village is north over the fields three miles from Attaree, near the big white house which was copied from a certain place of the Great Queen's by—by—I have forgotten the name. Can the Presence recall it? Sirdar Dyal Singh Attareewalla! Yes, that is the very man; but how does the Presence know? Born and bred in Hind, was he? O-o-oh! This is quite a different matter, The Sahib's nurse was

a Surtee woman from the Bombay side? That was a pity. She should have been an up-country wench; for those make stout nurses. There is no land like the Punjab. There are no people like the Sikhs. Umr Singh is my name, yes. An old man? Yes. A trooper only after all these years? Ye-es. Look at my uniform, if the Sahib doubts. Nay—nay; the Sahib looks too closely. All marks of rank were picked off it long ago, but—but it is true—mine is not a common cloth such as troopers use for their coats, and—the Sahib has sharp eyes—that black mark is such a mark as a silver chain leaves when long worn on the breast. The Sahib says that troopers do not wear silver chains? No-o. Troopers do not wear the Arder of Beritish India? No. The Sahib should have been in the Police of the Punjab. I am not a trooper, but I have been a Sahib's servant for nearly a year—bearer, butler, sweeper, any and all three. The Sahib says that Sikhs do not take menial service? True; but it was for Kurban Sahib—my Kurban Sahib—dead these three months!

. . . . .

Young—of a reddish face—with blue eyes, and he lilted a little on his feet when he was pleased, and cracked his finger-joints. So did his father before him, who was Deputy-Commissioner of

Jullundur in my father's time when I rode with the Gurgaon Rissala. *My* father? Jwala Singh. A Sikh of Sikhs—he fought against the English at Sobraon and carried the mark to his death. So we were knit as it were by a blood-tie, I and my Kurban Sahib. Yes, I was a trooper first—nay, I had risen to a Lance-Duffadar, I remember—and my father gave me a dun stallion of his own breeding on that day; and *he* was a little baba, sitting upon a wall by the parade-ground with his ayah—all in white, Sahib—laughing at the end of our drill. And his father and mine talked together, and mine beckoned to me, and I dismounted, and the baba put his hand into mine—eighteen—twenty-five—twenty-seven years gone now—Kurban Sahib—my Kurban Sahib! Oh, we were great friends after that! He cut his teeth on my sword-hilt, as the saying is. He called me Big Umr Singh—Buwwa Umwa Singh, for he could not speak plain. He stood only this high, Sahib, from the bottom of this truck, but he knew all our troopers by name—every one. . . . And he went to England, and he became a young man, and back he came, lilting a little in his walk, and cracking his finger-joints—back to his own regiment and to me. He had not forgotten either our speech or our customs. He was a Sikh at heart, Sahib. He was rich, open-handed, just, a friend

of poor troopers, keen-eyed, jestful, and careless. *I* could tell tales about him in his first years. There was very little he hid from *me*. I was his Umr Singh, and when we were alone he called me Father, and I called him Son. Yes, that was how we spoke. We spoke freely together on everything—about war, and women, and money, and advancement, and such all.

We spoke about this war, too, long before it came. There were many box-wallas, pedlars, with Pathans a few, in this country, notably at the city of Yunasbagh (Johannesburg), and they sent news in every week how the Sahibs lay without weapons under the heel of the Boer-log; and how big guns were hauled up and down the streets to keep Sahibs in order; and how a Sahib called Eger Sahib (Edgar?) was killed for a jest by the Boer-log. The Sahib knows how we of Hind hear all that passes over the earth? There was not a gun cocked in Yunasbagh that the echo did not come into Hind in a month. The Sahibs are very clever, but they forget their own cleverness has created the *dak* (the post), and that for an anna or two all things become known. We of Hind listened and heard and wondered; and when it was a sure thing, as reported by the pedlars and the vegetable-sellers, that the Sahibs of Yunasbagh lay in bondage to the Boer-log, certain among us asked questions

and waited for signs. Others of us mistook the meaning of those signs. *Wherefore, Sahib, came the long war in the Tirah!* This Kurban Sahib knew, and we talked together. He said, 'There is no haste. Presently we shall fight, and we shall fight for all Hind in that country round Yunasbagh.' Here he spoke truth. Does the Sahib not agree? Quite so. It is for Hind that the Sahibs are fighting this war. Ye cannot in one place rule and in another bear service. Either ye must everywhere rule or everywhere obey. God does not make the nations ringstraked. True—true—true!

So did matters ripen—a step at a time. It was nothing to me, except I think—and the Sahib sees this, too?—that it is foolish to make an army and break their hearts in idleness. Why have they not sent for the men of the Tochi—the men of the Tirah—the men of Buner? Folly, a thousand times. *We* could have done it all so gently—so gently.

Then, upon a day, Kurban Sahib sent for me and said, 'Ho, Dada, I am sick, and the doctor gives me a certificate for many months.' And he winked, and I said, 'I will get leave and nurse thee, Child. Shall I bring my uniform?' He said, 'Yes, and a sword for a sick man to lean on. We go to Bombay, and thence by sea to the

country of the Hubshis' (niggers). Mark his cleverness! He was first of all our men among the native regiments to get leave for sickness and to come here. Now they will not let our officers go away, sick or well, except they sign a bond not to take part in this war-game upon the road. But *he* was clever. There was no whisper of war when he took his sick-leave. I came also? Assuredly. I went to my Colonel, and sitting in the chair (I am—I was—of that rank for which a chair is placed when we speak with the Colonel), I said, 'My child goes sick. Give me leave, for I am old and sick also.'

And the Colonel, making the word double between English and our tongue, said, 'Yes, thou art truly *Sikh*'; and he called me an old devil—jestingly, as one soldier may jest with another; and he said my Kurban Sahib was a liar as to his health (that was true, too), and at long last he stood up and shook my hand, and bade me go and bring my Sahib safe again. My Sahib back again—aie me!

So I went to Bombay with Kurban Sahib, but there, at sight of the Black Water, Wajib Ali, his bearer, checked, and said that his mother was dead. Then I said to Kurban Sahib, 'What is one Mussulman pig more or less? Give me the keys of the trunks, and I will lay out the white

shirts for dinner.' Then I beat Wajib Ali at the back of Watson's Hotel, and that night I prepared Kurban Sahib's razors. I say, Sahib, that I, a Sikh of the Khalsa, an unshorn man, prepared the razors. But I did not put on my uniform while I did it. On the other hand, Kurban Sahib took for me, upon the steamer, a room in all respects like to this own, and would have given me a servant. We spoke of many things on the way to this country; and Kurban Sahib told me what he perceived would be the conduct of the war. He said, 'They have taken men afoot to fight men ahorse, and they will foolishly show mercy to these Boer-log because it is believed that they are white.' He said, 'There is but one fault in this war, and that is that the Government have not employed *us*, but have made it altogether a Sahibs' war. Very many men will thus be killed, and no vengeance will be taken.' True talk—true talk! It fell as Kurban Sahib foretold.

And we came to this country, even to Cape Town over yonder, and Kurban Sahib said, 'Bear the baggage to the big dak-bungalow, and I will look for employment fit for a sick man.' I put on the uniform of my rank and went to the big dak-bungalow called Maun Nihâl Seyn,[1] and I caused the heavy baggage to be bestowed in that

[1] Mount Nelson?

dark lower place—is it known to the Sahib?—which was already full of the swords and baggage of officers. It is fuller now—dead men's kit all! I was careful to secure a receipt for all three pieces. I have it in my belt. They must go back to the Punjab.

Anon came Kurban Sahib, lilting a little in his step, which sign I knew, and he said, 'We are born in a fortunate hour. We go to Eshtellenbosch to oversee the despatch of horses.' Remember, Kurban Sahib was squadron-leader of the Gurgaon Rissala, and *I* was Umr Singh. So I said, speaking as we do—we did—when none was near, 'Thou art a groom and I am a grass-cutter, but is this any promotion, Child?' At this he laughed, saying, 'It is the way to better things. Have patience, Father.' (Aye, he called me father when none were by.) 'This war ends not to-morrow nor the next day. I have seen the new Sahibs,' he said, 'and they are fathers of owls—all—all—all!'

So we went to Eshtellenbosch, where the horses are; Kurban Sahib doing the service of servants in that business. And the whole business was managed without forethought by new Sahibs from God knows where, who had never seen a tent pitched or a peg driven. They were full of zeal, but empty of all knowledge. Then came, little by little from Hind, those Pathans—they are just

like those vultures up there, Sahib—they always follow slaughter. And there came to Eshtellenbosch some Sikhs—Muzbees, though—and some Madras monkey-men. They came with horses. Puttiala sent horses. Jhind and Nabha sent horses. All the nations of the Khalsa sent horses. All the ends of the earth sent horses. God knows what the army did with them, unless they ate them raw. They used horses as a courtesan uses oil: with both hands. These horses needed many men. Kurban Sahib appointed me to the command (what a command for me!) of certain woolly ones—*Hubshis*—whose touch and shadow are pollution. They were enormous eaters; sleeping on their bellies; laughing without cause; wholly like animals. Some were called Fingoes, and some, I think, Red Kaffirs, but they were all Kaffirs—filth unspeakable. I taught them to water and feed, and sweep and rub down. Yes, I oversaw the work of sweepers—a *jemadar* of *mehtars* (headman of a refuse-gang) was I, and Kurban Sahib little better, for five months. Evil months! The war went as Kurban Sahib had said. Our new men were slain and no vengeance was taken. It was a war of fools armed with the weapons of magicians. Guns that slew at half a day's march, and men who, being new, walked blind into high grass and were driven off like

cattle by the Boer-log! As to the city of Eshtellenbosch, I am not a Sahib—only a Sikh. I would have quartered one troop only of the Gurgaon Rissala in that city—one little troop—and I would have schooled that city till its men learned to kiss the shadow of a Government horse upon the ground. There are many *mullahs* (priests) in Eshtellenbosch. They preached the Jehad against us. This is true—all the camp knew it. And most of the houses were thatched! A war of fools indeed!

At the end of five months my Kurban Sahib, who had grown lean, said, 'The reward has come. We go up towards the front with horses to-morrow, and, once away, I shall be too sick to return. Make ready the baggage.' Thus we got away, with some Kaffirs in charge of new horses for a certain new regiment that had come in a ship. The second day by *terain*, when we were watering at a desolate place without any sort of a bazaar to it, slipped out from the horse-boxes one Sikandar Khan, that had been a *jemadar* of *saises* (head-groom) at Eshtellenbosch, and was by service a trooper in a Border regiment. Kurban Sahib gave him big abuse for his desertion; but the Pathan put up his hands as excusing himself, and Kurban Sahib relented and added him to our service. So there were three of us—Kurban Sahib, I, and

Sikandar Khan—Sahib, Sikh, and *Sag* (dog). But the man said truly, 'We be far from our homes and both servants of the Raj. Make truce till we see the Indus again.' I have eaten from the same dish as Sikandar Khan—beef, too, for aught I know! He said, on the night he stole some swine's flesh in a tin from a mess-tent, that in his Book, the Koran, it is written that whoso engages in a holy war is freed from ceremonial obligations. Wah! He had no more religion than the sword-point picks up of sugar and water at baptism. He stole himself a horse at a place where there lay a new and very raw regiment. I also procured myself a grey gelding there. They let their horses stray too much, those new regiments.

Some shameless regiments would indeed have made away with *our* horses on the road! They exhibited indents and requisitions for horses, and once or twice would have uncoupled the trucks; but Kurban Sahib was wise, and I am not altogether a fool. There is not much honesty at the front. Notably, there was one congregation of hard-bitten horse-thieves; tall, light Sahibs, who spoke through their noses for the most part, and upon all occasions they said, 'Oah Hell!' which, in our tongue, signifies *Jehannum ko jao*. They bore each man a vine-leaf upon their uniforms, and they rode like Rajputs. Nay, they rode like Sikhs. They rode

like the Ustrelyahs! The Ustrelyahs, whom we met later, also spoke through their noses not little, and they were tall, dark men, with grey, clear eyes, heavily eyelashed like camel's eyes—very proper men—a new brand of Sahib to me. They said on all occasions, 'No fee-ah,' which in our tongue means *Durro mut* ('Do not be afraid'), so we called them the *Durro Muts*. Dark, tall men, most excellent horsemen, hot and angry, waging war *as* war, and drinking tea as a sandhill drinks water. Thieves? A little, Sahib. Sikandar Khan swore to me—and he comes of a horse-stealing clan for ten generations—he swore a Pathan was a babe beside a *Durro Mut* in regard to horse-lifting. The *Durro Muts* cannot walk on their feet at all. They are like hens on the high road. Therefore they must have horses. Very proper men, with a just lust for the war. Aah—'No fee-ah,' say the *Durro Muts*. *They* saw the worth of Kurban Sahib. *They* did not ask him to sweep stables. They would by no means let him go. He did substitute for one of their troop-leaders who had a fever, one long day in a country full of little hills—like the mouth of the Khaibar; and when they returned in the evening, the *Durro Muts* said, 'Wallah! This is a man. Steal him!' So they stole my Kurban Sahib as they would have stolen anything else that they needed, and they sent a

sick officer back to Eshtellenbosch in his place. Thus Kurban Sahib came to his own again, and I was his bearer, and Sikandar Khan was his cook. The law was strict that this was a Sahibs' war, but there was no order that a bearer and a cook should not ride with their Sahib—and we had naught to wear but our uniforms. We rode up and down this accursed country, where there is no bazaar, no pulse, no flour, no oil, no spice, no red pepper, no firewood; nothing but raw corn and a little cattle. There were no great battles as I saw it, but a plenty of gun-firing. When we were many, the Boer-log came out with coffee to greet us, and to show us *purwanas* (permits) from foolish English Generals who had gone that way before, certifying they were peaceful and well-disposed. When we were few, they hid behind stones and shot us. Now the order was that they were Sahibs, and this was a Sahibs' war. Good! But, as I understand it, when a Sahib goes to war, he puts on the cloth of war, and only those who wear that cloth may take part in the war. Good! That also I understand. But these people were as they were in Burma, or as the Afridis are. They shot at their pleasure, and when pressed hid the gun and exhibited *purwanas*, or lay in a house and said they were farmers. Even such farmers as cut up the Madras troops at Hlinedatalone in Burma! Even

such farmers as slew Cavagnari Sahib and the Guides at Kabul! We schooled *those* men, to be sure—fifteen, aye, twenty of a morning pushed off the veranda in front of the Bala Hissar. I looked that the Jung-i-lat Sahib (the Commander-in-Chief) would have remembered the old days; but—no. All the people shot at us everywhere, and he issued proclamations saying that he did not fight the people, but a certain army, which army, in truth, was all the Boer-log, who, between them, did not wear enough of uniform to make a loin-cloth. A fool's war from first to last; for it is manifest that he who fights should be hung if he fights with a gun in one hand and a *purwana* in the other, as did all these people. Yet we, when they had had their bellyful for the time, received them with honour, and gave them permits, and refreshed them and fed their wives and their babes, and severely punished our soldiers who took their fowls. So the work was to be done not once with a few dead, but thrice and four times over. I talked much with Kurban Sahib on this, and he said, 'It is a Sahibs' war. That is the order'; and one night, when Sikandar Khan would have lain out beyond the pickets with his knife and shown them how it is worked on the Border, he hit Sikandar Khan between the eyes and came near to breaking in his head. Then Sikandar Khan, a bandage over his

eyes, so that he looked like a sick camel, talked to him half one march, and he was more bewildered than I, and vowed he would return to Eshtellenbosch. But privately to me Kurban Sahib said we should have loosed the Sikhs and the Gurkhas on these people till they came in with their foreheads in the dust. For the war was not of that sort which they comprehended.

They shot us? Assuredly they shot us from houses adorned with a white flag; but when they came to know our custom, their widows sent word by Kaffir runners, and presently there was not quite so much firing. *No fee-ah!* All the Boer-log with whom we dealt had *purwanas* signed by mad Generals attesting that they were well disposed to the State. They had also rifles not a few, and cartridges, which they hid in the roof. The women wept very greatly when we burned such houses, but they did not approach too near after the flames had taken good hold of the thatch, for fear of the bursting cartridges. The women of the Boer-log are very clever. They are more clever than the men. The Boer-log are clever? Never, never, no! It is the Sahibs who are fools. For their own honour's sake the Sahibs must say that the Boer-log are clever; but it is the Sahibs' wonderful folly that has made the Boer-log. The Sahibs should have sent *us* into the game.

But the *Durro Muts* did well. They dealt faithfully with all that country thereabouts—not in any way as we of Hind should have dealt, but they were not altogether fools. One night when we lay on the top of a ridge in the cold, I saw far away a light in a house that appeared for the sixth part of an hour and was obscured. Anon it appeared again thrice for the twelfth part of an hour. I showed this to Kurban Sahib, for it was a house that had been spared—the people having many permits and swearing fidelity at our stirrup-leathers. I said to Kurban Sahib, 'Send half a troop, Child, and finish that house. They signal to their brethren.' And he laughed where he lay and said, 'If I listened to my bearer Umr Singh, there would not be left ten houses in all this land.' I said, 'What need to leave one? This is as it was in Burma. They are farmers to-day and fighters to-morrow. Let us deal justly with them.' He laughed and curled himself up in his blanket, and I watched the far light in the house till day. I have been on the Border in eight wars, not counting Burma. The first Afghan War; the second Afghan War; two Mahsud Waziri wars (that is four); two Black Mountain wars, if I remember right; the Malakand and Tirah. I do not count Burma, or some small things. *I* know when house signals to house!

I pushed Sikandar Khan with my foot, and he saw it too. He said, 'One of the Boer-log who brought pumpkins for the mess, which I fried last night, lives in yonder house.' I said, 'How dost thou know?' He said, 'Because he rode out of the camp another way, but I marked how his horse fought with him at the turn of the road; and before the light fell I stole out of the camp for evening prayer with Kurban Sahib's glasses, and from a little hill I saw the pied horse of that pumpkin-seller hurrying to that house.' I said naught, but took Kurban Sahib's glasses from his greasy hands and cleaned them with a silk handkerchief and returned them to their case. Sikandar Khan told me that he had been the first man in the Zenab valley to use glasses—whereby he finished two blood-feuds cleanly in the course of three months' leave. But he was otherwise a liar.

That day Kurban Sahib, with some ten troopers, was sent on to spy the land for our camp. The *Durro Muts* moved slowly at that time. They were weighted with grain and forage and carts, and they greatly wished to leave these all in some town and go on light to other business which pressed. So Kurban Sahib sought a short cut for them, a little off the line of march. We were twelve miles before the main body, and we came to a house under a high bushed hill, with a nullah,

which they call a donga, behind it, and an old sangar of piled stones, which they call a kraal, before it. Two thorn bushes grew on either side of the door, like babul bushes, covered with a golden-coloured bloom, and the roof was all of thatch. Before the house was a valley of stones that rose to another bush-covered hill. There was an old man in the veranda—an old man with a white beard and a wart upon the left side of his neck; and a fat woman with the eyes of a swine and the jowl of a swine; and a tall young man deprived of understanding. His head was hairless, no larger than an orange, and the pits of his nostrils were eaten away by a disease. He laughed and slavered and he sported sportively before Kurban Sahib. The man brought coffee and the woman showed us *purwanas* from three General-Sahibs, certifying that they were people of peace and goodwill. Here are the *purwanas*, Sahib. Does the Sahib know the Generals who signed them?

They swore the land was empty of Boer-log. They held up their hands and swore it. That was about the time of the evening meal. I stood near the veranda with Sikandar Khan, who was nosing like a jackal on a lost scent. At last he took my arm and said, 'See yonder! There is the sun on the window of the house that signalled

last night. This house can see that house from here,' and he looked at the hill behind him all hairy with bushes, and sucked in his breath. Then the idiot with the shrivelled head danced by me and threw back that head, and regarded the roof and laughed like a hyena, and the fat woman talked loudly, as it were, to cover some noise. After this I passed to the back of the house on pretence to get water for tea, and I saw fresh horse-dung on the ground, and that the ground was cut with the new marks of hoofs; and there had dropped in the dirt one cartridge. Then Kurban Sahib called to me in our tongue, saying, 'Is this a good place to make tea?' and I replied, knowing what he meant, 'There are over many cooks in the cook-house. Mount and go, Child.' Then I returned, and he said, smiling to the woman, 'Prepare food, and when we have loosened our girths we will come in and eat'; but to his men he said in a whisper, 'Ride away!' No. He did not cover the old man or the fat woman with his rifle. That was not his custom. Some fool of the *Durro Muts*, being hungry, raised his voice to dispute the order to flee, and before we were in our saddles many shots came from the roof—from rifles thrust through the thatch. Upon this we rode across the valley of stones, and men fired at us from the

nullah behind the house, and from the hill behind the nullah, as well as from the roof of the house —so many shots that it sounded like a drumming in the hills. Then Sikandar Khan, riding low, said, 'This play is not for us alone, but for the rest of the *Durro Muts*,' and I said, 'Be quiet. Keep place!' for his place was behind me, and I rode behind Kurban Sahib. But these new bullets will pass through five men a-row! We were not hit—not one of us—and we reached the hill of rocks and scattered among the stones, and Kurban Sahib turned in his saddle and said, 'Look at the old man!' He stood in the veranda firing swiftly with a gun, the woman beside him and the idiot also—both with guns. Kurban Sahib laughed, and I caught him by the wrist, but—his fate was written at that hour. The bullet passed under my arm-pit and struck him in the liver, and I pulled him backward between two great rocks a-tilt—Kurban Sahib, my Kurban Sahib! From the nullah behind the house and from the hills came our Boer-log in number more than a hundred, and Sikandar Khan said, '*Now* we see the meaning of last night's signal. Give me the rifle.' He took Kurban Sahib's rifle—in this war of fools only the doctors carry swords—and lay belly-flat to the work, but Kurban Sahib turned where he lay and said, 'Be

still. It is a Sahibs' war,' and Kurban Sahib put up his hand—thus; and then his eyes rolled on me, and I gave him water that he might pass the more quickly. And at the drinking his Spirit received permission. . . .

Thus went our fight, Sahib. We *Durro Muts* were on a ridge working from the north to the south, where lay our main body, and the Boer-log lay in a valley working from east to west. There were more than a hundred, and our men were ten, but they held the Boer-log in the valley while they swiftly passed along the ridge to the south. I saw three Boers drop in the open. Then they all hid again and fired heavily at the rocks that hid our men; but our men were clever and did not show, but moved away and away, always south; and the noise of the battle withdrew itself southward, where we could hear the sound of big guns. So it fell stark dark, and Sikandar Khan found a deep old jackal's earth amid rocks, into which we slid the body of Kurban Sahib upright. Sikandar Khan took his glasses, and I took his handkerchief and some letters and a certain thing which I knew hung round his neck, and Sikandar Khan is witness that I wrapped them all in the handkerchief. Then we took an oath together. and lay still and mourned for Kurban Sahib. Sikandar Khan wept till

daybreak—even he, a Pathan, a Mohammedan! All that night we heard firing to the southward, and when the dawn broke the valley was full of Boer-log in carts and on horses. They gathered by the house, as we could see through Kurban Sahib's glasses, and the old man, who, I take it, was a priest, blessed them, and preached the holy war, waving his arm; and the fat woman brought coffee, and the idiot capered among them and kissed their horses. Presently they went away in haste; they went over the hills and were not; and a black slave came out and washed the door-sills with bright water. Sikandar Khan saw through the glasses that the stain was blood, and he laughed, saying, 'Wounded men lie there. We shall yet get vengeance.'

About noon we saw a thin, high smoke to the southward, such a smoke as a burning house will make in sunshine, and Sikandar Khan, who knows how to take a bearing across a hill, said, 'At last we have burned the house of the pumpkin-seller whence they signalled.' And I said, 'What need now that they have slain my child? Let me mourn.' It was a high smoke, and the old man, as I saw, came out into the veranda to behold it, and shook his clenched hands at it. So we lay till the twilight, foodless and without water, for we had vowed a vow neither to eat nor to drink till we

had accomplished the matter. I had a little opium left, of which I gave Sikandar Khan the half, because he loved Kurban Sahib. When it was full dark we sharpened our sabres upon a certain softish rock which, mixed with water, sharpens steel well, and we took off our boots and we went down to the house and looked through the windows very softly. The old man sat reading in a book, and the woman sat by the hearth; and the idiot lay on the floor with his head against her knee, and he counted his fingers and laughed, and she laughed again. So I knew they were mother and son, and I laughed, too, for I had suspected this when I claimed her life and her body from Sikandar Khan, in our discussion of the spoil. Then we entered with bare swords. . . . Indeed, these Boer-log do not understand the steel, for the old man ran towards a rifle in the corner; but Sikandar Khan prevented him with a blow of the flat across the hands, and he sat down and held up his hands, and I put my fingers on my lips to signify they should be silent. But the woman cried, and one stirred in an inner room, and a door opened, and a man, bound about the head with rags, stood stupidly fumbling with a gun. His whole head fell inside the door, and none followed him. It was a very pretty stroke—for a Pathan. Then they were silent, staring at the head upon the floor, and I

said to Sikandar Khan, 'Fetch ropes! Not even for Kurban Sahib's sake will I defile my sword.' So he went to seek and returned with three long leather ones, and said, 'Four wounded lie within, and doubtless each has a permit from a General,' and he stretched the ropes and laughed. Then I bound the old man's hands behind his back, and unwillingly—for he laughed in my face, and would have fingered my beard—the idiot's. At this the woman with the swine's eyes and the jowl of a swine ran forward, and Sikandar Khan said, 'Shall I strike or bind? She was thy property on the division.' And I said, 'Refrain! I have made a chain to hold her. Open the door.' I pushed out the two across the veranda into the darker shade of the thorn-trees, and she followed upon her knees and lay along the ground, and pawed at my boots and howled. Then Sikandar Khan bore out the lamp, saying that he was a butler and would light the table, and I looked for a branch that would bear fruit. But the woman hindered me not a little with her screechings and plungings, and spoke fast in her tongue, and I replied in my tongue, 'I am childless to-night because of thy perfidy, and *my* child was praised among men and loved among women. He would have begotten men—not animals. Thou hast more years to live than I, but my grief is the greater.'

I stooped to make sure the noose upon the idiot's neck, and flung the end over the branch, and Sikandar Khan held up the lamp that she might well see. Then appeared suddenly, a little beyond the light of the lamp, the spirit of Kurban Sahib. One hand he held to his side, even where the bullet had struck him, and the other he put forward thus, and said, 'No. It is a Sahibs' war.' And I said, 'Wait a while, Child, and thou shalt sleep.' But he came nearer, riding, as it were, upon my eyes, and said, 'No. It is a Sahibs' war.' And Sikandar Khan said, 'Is it too heavy?' and set down the lamp and came to me; and as he turned to tally on the rope, the spirit of Kurban Sahib stood up within arm's reach of us, and his face was very angry, and a third time he said, 'No. It is a Sahibs' war.' And a little wind blew out the lamp, and I heard Sikandar Khan's teeth chatter in his head.

So we stayed side by side, the ropes in our hand, a very long while, for we could not shape any words. Then I heard Sikandar Khan open his water-bottle and drink; and when his mouth was slaked he passed to me and said, 'We are absolved from our vow.' So I drank, and together we waited for the dawn in that place where we stood—the ropes in our hand. A little after third cockcrow we heard the feet of horses and gun-

wheels very far off, and so soon as the light came a shell burst on the threshold of the house, and the roof of the veranda that was thatched fell in and blazed before the windows. And I said, 'What of the wounded Boer-log within?' And Sikandar Khan said, 'We have heard the order. It is a Sahibs' war. Stand still.' Then came a second shell—good line, but short—and scattered dust upon us where we stood; and then came ten of the little quick shells from the gun that speaks like a stammerer—yes, pompom the Sahibs call it—and the face of the house folded down like the nose and the chin of an old man mumbling, and the forefront of the house lay down. Then Sikandar Khan said, 'If it be the fate of the wounded to die in the fire, *I* shall not prevent it.' And he passed to the back of the house and presently came back, and four wounded Boer-log came after him, of whom two could not walk upright. And I said, 'What hast thou done?' And he said, 'I have neither spoken to them nor laid hand on them. They follow in hope of mercy.' And I said, 'It is a Sahibs' war. Let them wait the Sahibs' mercy.' So they lay still, the four men and the idiot, and the fat woman under the thorn-tree, and the house burned furiously. Then began the known sound of cartouches in the roof—one or two at first; then a trill, and last of all

one loud noise and the thatch blew here and there, and the captives would have crawled aside on account of the heat that was withering the thorn-trees, and on account of wood and bricks flying at random. But I said, 'Abide! Abide! Ye be Sahibs, and this is a Sahibs' war, O Sahibs. There is no order that ye should depart from this war.' They did not understand my words. Yet they abode and they lived.

Presently rode down five troopers of Kurban Sahib's command, and one I knew spoke my tongue, having sailed to Calcutta often with horses. So I told him all my tale, using bazaar-talk, such as his kidney of Sahib would understand; and at the end I said, 'An order has reached us here from the dead that this is a Sahibs' war. I take the soul of my Kurban Sahib to witness that I give over to the justice of the Sahibs these Sahibs who have made me childless.' Then I gave him the ropes and fell down senseless, my heart being very full, but my belly was empty, except for the little opium.

They put me into a cart with one of their wounded, and after a while I understood that they had fought against the Boer-log for two days and two nights. It was all one big trap, Sahib, of which we, with Kurban Sahib, saw no more than the outer edge. They were very angry, the

Durro Muts—very angry indeed. I have never seen Sahibs so angry. They buried my Kurban Sahib with the rites of his faith upon the top of the ridge overlooking the house, and I said the proper prayers of the faith, and Sikandar Khan prayed in his fashion and stole five signalling-candles, which have each three wicks, and lighted the grave as if it had been the grave of a saint on a Friday. He wept very bitterly all that night, and I wept with him, and he took hold of my feet and besought me to give him a remembrance from Kurban Sahib. So I divided equally with him one of Kurban Sahib's handkerchiefs—not the silk ones, for those were given him by a certain woman; and I also gave him a button from a coat, and a little steel ring of no value that Kurban Sahib used for his keys, and he kissed them and put them into his bosom. The rest I have here in that little bundle, and I must get the baggage from the hotel in Cape Town—some four shirts we sent to be washed, for which we could not wait when we went up-country—and I must give them all to my Colonel-Sahib at Sialkote in the Punjab. For my child is dead—my baba is dead! . . .

I would have come away before; there was no need to stay, the child being dead; but we were far from the rail, and the *Durro Muts* were as

brothers to me, and I had come to look upon Sikandar Khan as in some sort a friend, and he got me a horse and I rode up and down with them; but the life had departed. God knows what they called me—orderly, *chaprassi* (messenger), cook, sweeper, I did not know nor care. But once I had pleasure. We came back in a month after wide circles to that very valley. I knew it every stone, and I went up to the grave, and a clever Sahib of the *Durro Muts* (we left a troop there for a week to school those people with *purwanas*) had cut an inscription upon a great rock; and they interpreted it to me, and it was a jest such as Kurban Sahib himself would have loved. Oh! I have the inscription well copied here. Read it aloud, Sahib, and I will explain the jests. There are two very good ones. Begin, Sahib:—

In Memory of
WALTER DECIES CORBYN
Late Captain 141st Punjab Cavalry

The Gurgaon Rissala, that is. Go on, Sahib.

Treacherously shot near this place by
The connivance of the late
HENDRIK DIRK UYS
A Minister of God
Who thrice took the oath of neutrality
And Piet his son,
This little work

Aha! This is the first jest. The Sahib should see this little work!

Was accomplished in partial
And inadequate recognition of their loss
By some men who loved him

Si monumentum requiris circumspice

That is the second jest. It signifies that those who would desire to behold a proper memorial to Kurban Sahib must look out at the house. And, Sahib, the house is not there, nor the well, nor the big tank which they call dams, nor the little fruit-trees, nor the cattle. There is nothing at all, Sahib, except the two trees withered by the fire. The rest is like the desert here—or my hand—or my heart. Empty, Sahib—all empty!

'THEIR LAWFUL OCCASIONS'

THE WET LITANY

When the water's countenance
Blurrs 'twixt glance and second glance;
When the tattered smokes forerun
Ashen 'neath a silvered sun;
When the curtain of the haze
Shuts upon our helpless ways—
    Hear the Channel Fleet at sea;
    Libera nos Domine!

When the engines' bated pulse
Scarcely thrills the nosing hulls;
When the wash along the side
Sounds, a sudden, magnified
When the intolerable blast
Marks each blindfold minute passed.

When the fog-buoy's squattering flight
Guides us through the haggard night;
When the warning bugle blows;
When the lettered doorways close;
When our brittle townships press,
Impotent, on emptiness.

When the unseen leadsmen lean
Questioning a deep unseen;

When their lessened count they tell
To a bridge invisible;
When the hid and perilous
Cliffs return our cry to us.

When the treble thickness spread
Swallows up our next-ahead;
When her siren's frightened whine
Shows her sheering out of line;
When, her passage undiscerned,
We must turn where she has turned—
Hear the Channel Fleet at sea;
Libera nos Domine!

'THEIR LAWFUL OCCASIONS'

'. . . And a security for such as pass on the seas upon their lawful occasions.'—*Navy Prayer.*

PART I

DISREGARDING the inventions of the Marine Captain, whose other name is Gubbins, let a plain statement suffice.

H.M.S. *Caryatid* went to Portland to join Blue Fleet for manœuvres. I travelled overland from London by way of Portsmouth, where I fell among friends. When I reached Portland, H.M.S. *Caryatid*, whose guest I was to have been, had, with Blue Fleet, already sailed for some secret rendezvous off the west coast of Ireland, and Portland breakwater was filled with Red Fleet, my official enemies and joyous acquaintances, who received me with unstinted hospitality. For example, Lieutenant-Commander A. L. Hignett, in charge of three destroyers, *Wraith*, *Stiletto*, and *Kobbold*, due to

depart at 6 p.m. that evening, offered me a berth on his thirty-knot flagship, but I preferred my comforts, and so accepted sleeping-room in H.M.S. *Pedantic* (15,000 tons), leader of the second line. After dining aboard her I took boat to Weymouth to get my kit aboard, as the battleships would go to war at midnight. In transferring my allegiance from Blue to Red Fleet, whatever the Marine Captain may say, I did no wrong. I truly intended to return to the *Pedantic* and help to fight Blue Fleet. All I needed was a new toothbrush, which I bought from a chemist in a side street at 9.15 p.m. As I turned to go, one entered seeking alleviation of a gum-boil. He was dressed in a checked ulster, a black silk hat three sizes too small, cord-breeches, boots, and pure brass spurs. These he managed painfully, stepping like a prisoner fresh from leg-irons. As he adjusted the pepper-plaster to the gum the light fell on his face, and I recognised Mr. Emanuel Pyecroft, late second-class petty officer of H.M.S. *Archimandrite*, an unforgettable man, met a year before under Tom Wessels' roof in Plymouth. It occurred to me that when a petty officer takes to spurs he may conceivably meditate desertion. For that reason I, though a taxpayer, made no sign. Indeed, it was Mr. Pyecroft, following me out of the shop, who said hollowly: 'What might you be doing here?'

'I'm going on manœuvres in the *Pedantic*,' I replied.

'Ho!' said Mr. Pyecroft. 'An' what manner o' manœuvres d'you expect to see in a blighted cathedral like the *Pedantic*? *I* know 'er. I knew her in Malta, when the *Vulcan* was her permanent tender. Manœuvres! You won't see more than "Man an' arm watertight doors!" in your little woollen undervest.'

'I'm sorry for that.'

'Why?' He lurched heavily as his spurs caught and twanged like tuning-forks. 'War's declared at midnight. *Pedantics* be sugared! Buy an 'am an' see life!'

For the moment I fancied Mr. Pyecroft, a fugitive from justice, purposed that we two should embrace a Robin Hood career in the uplands of Dorset. The spurs troubled me, and I made bold to say as much. 'Them!' he said, coming to an intricate halt. 'They're part of the *prima facie* evidence. But as for me—let me carry your bag—I'm second in command, leadin'-hand, cook, steward, an' lavatory man, with a few incidentals for sixpence a day extra, on No. 267 torpedo-boat.'

'They wear spurs there?'

'Well,' said Mr. Pyecroft, 'seein' that Two Six Seven belongs to Blue Fleet, which left the day before yesterday, disguises are imperative.

It transpired thus. The Right Honourable Lord Gawd Almighty Admiral Master Frankie Frobisher, K.C.B., commandin' Blue Fleet, can't be bothered with one tin-torpedo-boat more or less; and what with lyin' in the Reserve four years, an' what with the new kind o' tiffy which cleans dynamos with brick-dust and oil (Blast these spurs! They won't render!), Two Six Seven's steam-gadgets was paralytic. Our Mr. Moorshed done his painstakin' best—it's his first command of a war-canoe, matoor age nineteen (down that alley-way, please!) but be that as it may, His Holiness Frankie is aware of us crabbin' ourselves round the breakwater at five knots, an' steerin' *pari passu*, as the French say. (Up this alley-way, please!) If he'd given Mr. Hinchcliffe, our chief engineer, a little time, it would never have transpired, for what Hinch can't drive he can coax; but the new port bein' a trifle cloudy, an' 'is joints tinglin' after a post-captain dinner, Frankie come on the upper bridge seekin' for a sacrifice. We, offerin' a broadside target, got it. He told us what 'is grandmamma, 'oo was a lady an' went to sea in stick-and-string bateaus, had told him about steam. He threw in his own prayers for the 'ealth an' safety of all steam-packets an' their officers. Then he give us several distinct orders. The first few—I kept tally—was all about going to Hell; the next many

was about not evolutin' in his company, when there; an' the last all was simply repeatin' the motions in quick time. Knowin' Frankie's groovin' to be badly eroded by age and lack of attention, I didn't much panic; but our Mr. Moorshed, 'e took it a little to heart. Me an' Mr. Hinchcliffe consoled 'im as well as service conditions permits of, an' we had a *résume*-supper at the back o' the camber—secluded *an'* lugubrious! Then one thing leadin' up to another, an' our orders, except about anchorin' where he's booked for, leavin' us a clear 'orizon, Number Two Six Seven is now —mind the edge of the wharf—here!'

By mysterious doublings he had brought me out on to the edge of a narrow strip of water crowded with coastwise shipping that runs far up into Weymouth town. A large foreign timber-brig lay at my feet, and under the round of her stern cowered, close to the wharf-edge, a slate-coloured, unkempt, two-funnelled craft of a type —but I am no expert—between the first-class torpedo-boat and the full-blooded destroyer. From her archaic torpedo-tubes at the stern, and quick-firers forward and amidships, she must have dated from the early 'nineties. Hammerings and clinkings, with spurts of steam and fumes of hot oil, arose from her inside, and a figure in a striped jersey squatted on the engine-room gratings.

'She ain't much of a war-canoe, but you'll see more life in 'er than on an whole squadron of bleedin' *Pedantics*.'

'But she's laid up here—and Blue Fleet have gone,' I protested.

'Pre-cisely. Only, in his comprehensive orders Frankie did'nt put us out of action. Thus we're a non-neglectable fightin' factor which you mightn't think from this elevation; *an'* m'rover, Red Fleet don't know we're 'ere. Most of us'—he glanced proudly at his boots—'didn't run to spurs, but we're disguised pretty devious, as you might say. Morgan, our signaliser, when last seen, was a Dawlish bathing-machine proprietor. Hinchcliffe was naturally a German waiter, and me you behold as a squire of low degree; while yonder Levantine dragoman on the hatch is our Mr. Moorshed. He was the second cutter's snotty—*my* snotty—on the *Archimandrite*—two years—Cape Station. Likewise on the West Coast, mangrove-swampin', an' gettin' the cutter stove in on small an' unlikely bars, an' manufacturin' lies to correspond. What I don't know about Mr. Moorshed is precisely the same gauge as what Mr. Moorshed don't know about me—half a millimetre, as you might say. He comes into awful opulence of his own when 'e's of age; an' judgin' from what passed between us when Frankie cursed 'im, I don't think 'e cares

whether he's broke to-morrow or—the day after. Are you beginnin' to follow our tattics? They'll be worth followin'. Or *are* you goin' back to your nice little cabin on the *Pedantic*—which I lay they've just dismounted the third engineer out of—to eat four fat meals per diem, an' smoke in the casement?'

The figure in the jersey lifted its head and mumbled.

'Yes, Sir,' was Mr. Pyecroft's answer. 'I 'ave ascertained that *Stiletto*, *Wraith*, and *Kobbold* left at 6 p.m. with the first division o' Red Fleet's cruisers except *Devolution* and *Cryptic*, which are delayed by engine-room defects.' Then to me: 'Won't you go aboard? Mr. Moorshed 'ud like some one to talk to. You buy an' 'am an' see life.'

At this he vanished; and the Demon of Pure Irresponsibility bade me lower myself from the edge of the wharf to the tea-tray plates of No. 267.

'What d'you want?' said the striped jersey.

'I want to join Blue Fleet if I can,' I replied. 'I've been left behind by—an accident.'

'Well?'

'Mr. Pyecroft told me to buy a ham and see life. About how big a ham do you need?'

'I don't want any ham, thank you. That's the way up the wharf. *Good*-night.'

'Good-night!' I retraced my steps, wandered in the dark till I found a shop, and there purchased, of sardines, canned tongue, lobster, and salmon, not less than half a hundredweight. A belated sausage-shop supplied me with a partially cut ham of pantomime tonnage. These things I, sweating, bore out to the edge of the wharf and set down in the shadow of a crane. It was a clear, dark summer night, and from time to time I laughed happily to myself. The adventure was preordained on the face of it. Pyecroft alone, spurred or barefoot, would have drawn me very far from the paths of circumspection. His advice to buy a ham and see life clinched it. Presently Mr. Pyecroft—I heard spurs clink—passed me. Then the jersey voice said: 'What the mischief's that?'

''Asn't the visitor come aboard, Sir? 'E told me he'd purposely abandoned the *Pedantic* for the pleasure of the trip with us. Told me he was official correspondent for the *Times*; an' I know he's littery by the way 'e tries to talk Navy-talk. Haven't you seen 'im, Sir?'

Slowly and dispassionately the answer drawled long on the night; 'Pye, you are without exception the biggest liar in the Service!'

'Then what am I to do with the bag, Sir? It's marked with his name.' There was a pause

till Mr. Moorshed said 'Oh!' in a tone which the listener might construe precisely as he pleased.

'*He* was the maniac who wanted to buy a ham and see life—was he? If he goes back to the *Pedantic*——'

'Pre-cisely, Sir. Gives us all away, Sir.'

'Then what possessed *you* to give it away to him, you owl?'

'I've got his bag. If 'e gives anything away, he'll have to go naked.'

At this point I thought it best to rattle my tins and step out of the shadow of the crane.

'I've bought the ham,' I called sweetly. 'Have you still any objection to my seeing life, Mr. Moorshed?'

'All right, if you're insured. Won't you come down?'

I descended; Pyecroft, by a silent flank movement, possessing himself of all the provisions, which he bore to some hole forward.

'Have you known Mr. Pyecroft long?' said my host.

'Met him once, a year ago, at Devonport. What do you think of him?'

'What do *you* think of him?'

'I've left the *Pedantic*—her boat will be waiting for me at ten o'clock, too—simply because I happened to meet him,' I replied.

'That's all right. If you'll come down below, we may get some grub.'

We descended a naked steel ladder to a steel-beamed tunnel, perhaps twelve feet long by six high. Leather-topped lockers ran along either side; a swinging table, with tray and lamp above, occupied the centre. Other furniture there was none.

'You can't shave here, of course. We don't wash, and, as a rule, we eat with our fingers when we're at sea. D'you mind?'

Mr. Moorshed, black-haired, black-browed, sallow-complexioned, looked me over from head to foot and grinned. He was not handsome in any way, but his smile drew the heart. 'You didn't happen to hear what Frankie told me from the flagship, did you? His last instructions, and I've logged 'em here in shorthand, were'—he opened a neat pocket-book—'"*Get out of this and conduct your own damned manœuvres in your own damned tinker fashion! You're a disgrace to the Service, and your boat's offal.*"'

'Awful?' I said.

'No—offal—tripes—swipes—ullage.' Mr. Pyecroft entered, in the costume of his calling, with the ham and an assortment of tin dishes, which he dealt out like cards.

'I shall take these as my orders,' said Mr.

Moorshed. 'I'm chucking the Service at the end of the year, so it doesn't matter.'

We cut into the ham under the ill-trimmed lamp, washed it down with whisky, and then smoked. From the foreside of the bulkhead came an uninterrupted hammering and clinking, and now and then a hiss of steam.

'That's Mr. Hinchcliffe,' said Pyecroft. 'He's what is called a first-class engine-room artificer. If you hand 'im a drum of oil an' leave 'im alone, he can coax a stolen bicycle to do typewritin'.'

Very leisurely, at the end of his first pipe, Mr. Moorshed drew out a folded map, cut from a newspaper, of the area of manœuvres, with the rules that regulate these wonderful things, below.

'Well, I suppose I know as much as an average stick-and-string admiral,' he said, yawning. 'Is our petticoat ready yet, Mr. Pyecroft?'

As a preparation for naval manœuvres these councils seemed inadequate. I followed up the ladder into the gloom cast by the wharf edge and the big lumber-ship's side. As my eyes stretched to the darkness I saw that No. 267 had miraculously sprouted an extra pair of funnels—soft, for they gave as I touched them.

'More *prima facie* evidence. You runs a rope fore an' aft, an' you erects perpendick-u-arly two

canvas tubes, which you distends with cane hoops, thus 'avin' as many funnels as a destroyer. At the word o' command, up they go like a pair of concertinas, an' consequently collapses equally 'andy when requisite. Comin' aft we shall doubtless overtake the Dawlish bathin'-machine proprietor fittin' on her bustle.'

Mr. Pyecroft whispered this in my ear as Moorshed moved toward a group at the stern.

'None of us who ain't built that way can be destroyers, but we can look as near it as we can. Let me explain to you, Sir, that the stern of a Thornycroft boat, which we are *not*, comes out in a pretty bulge, totally different from the Yarrow mark, which again we are not. But, on the other 'and, *Dirk*, *Stiletto*, *Goblin*, *Ghoul*, *Djinn*, and *A-frite*—Red Fleet dee-stroyers, with 'oom we hope to consort later on terms o' perfect equality —*are* Thornycrofts, an' carry that Grecian bend which we are now adjustin' to our *arrière-pensée*—as the French would put it—by means of painted canvas an' iron rods bent as requisite. Between you an' me an' Frankie, we are the *Gnome*, now in the Fleet Reserve at Pompey—Portsmouth, I should say.'

'The first sea will carry it all away,' said Moorshed, leaning gloomily outboard, 'but it will do for the present.'

'We've a lot of *prima facie* evidence about us,' Mr. Pyecroft went on. 'A first-class torpedo-boat sits lower in the water than a destroyer. Hence we artificially raise our sides with a black canvas wash-streak to represent extra freeboard; *at* the same time paddin' out the cover of the forward three-pounder like as if it was a twelve-pounder, an' variously fakin' up the bows of 'er. As you might say, we've took thought an' added a cubic to our stature. It's our len'th that sugars us. A 'undred an' forty feet, which is our len'th, into two 'undred and ten, which is about the *Gnome's*, leaves seventy feet over, which we haven't got.'

'Is this all your own notion, Mr. Pyecroft?' I asked.

'In spots, you might say—yes; though we all contributed to make up deficiencies. But Mr. Moorshed, not much carin' for further Navy after what Frankie said, certainly threw himself into the part with avidity.'

'What the dickens are we going to do?'

'Speaking as a seaman gunner, I should say we'd wait till the sights came on, an' then fire. Speakin' as a torpedo-coxswain, L.T.O., T.I., M.D., etc., I presume we fall in—Number One in rear of the tube, etc., secure tube to ball or dia-phragm, clear away securin'-bar, release safety-pin

from lockin'-levers, an' pray Heaven to look down on us. As second in command o' 267, I say wait an' see!'

'What's happened? We're off,' I said. The timber-ship had slid away from us.

'We are. Stern first, an' broadside on! If we don't hit anything too hard, we'll do.'

'Come on the bridge,' said Mr. Moorshed. I saw no bridge, but fell over some sort of conning-tower forward, near which was a wheel. For the next few minutes I was more occupied with cursing my own folly than with the science of navigation. Therefore I cannot say how we got out of Weymouth Harbour, nor why it was necessary to turn sharp to the left and wallow in what appeared to be surf.

'Excuse me,' said Mr. Pyecroft behind us, '*I* don't mind rammin' a bathin'-machine; but if only *one* of them week-end Weymouth blighters has thrown his empty baccy-tin into the sea here, we'll rip our plates open on it; 267 isn't the *Archimandrite's* old cutter.'

'I am hugging the shore,' was the answer.

'There's no actual 'arm in huggin', but it can come expensive if pursooed.'

'Right O!' said Moorshed, putting down the wheel, and as we left those scant waters I felt 267 move more freely.

A thin cough ran up the speaking-tube.

'Well, what is it, Mr. Hinchcliffe?' said Moorshed.

'I merely wished to report that she is still continuin' to go, Sir.'

'Right O! Can we whack her up to fifteen, d'you think?'

'I'll try, Sir; but we'd prefer to have the engine-room hatch open—at first, Sir.'

Whacked up then she was, and for half an hour we careered largely through the night, turning at last with a suddenness that slung us across the narrow deck.

'This,' said Mr. Pyecroft, who received me on his chest as a large rock receives a shadow, 'represents the *Gnome* arrivin' cautious from the direction o' Portsmouth, with Admiralty orders.'

He pointed through the darkness ahead, and after much staring my eyes opened to a dozen destroyers, in two lines, some few hundred yards away.

'Those are the Red Fleet destroyer flotilla, which is too frail to panic about among the full-blooded cruisers inside Portland breakwater, and several millimetres too excited over the approachin' war to keep a look-out inshore. Hence our tattics!'

We wailed through our siren—a long, malig-

nant, hyena-like howl—and a voice hailed us as we went astern tumultuously.

'The *Gnome*—Carteret-Jones—from Portsmouth, with orders—mm—mm—*Stiletto*,' Moorshed answered through the megaphone in a high, whining voice, rather like a chaplain's.

'*Who?*' was the answer.

'Carter—et—Jones.'

'Oh Lord!'

There was a pause; a voice cried to some friend, 'It's Podgie, adrift on the high seas in charge of a whole dee-stroyer!'

Another voice echoed, 'Podgie!' and from its note I gathered that Mr. Carteret-Jones had a reputation, but not for independent command.

'Who's your sub?' said the first speaker, a shadow on the bridge of the *Dirk*.

'A gunner at present, Sir. The *Stiletto*—broken down—turns over to us.'

'When did the *Stiletto* break down?'

'Off the Start, Sir; two hours after—after she left here this evening, I believe! My orders are to report to you for the manœuvre signal-codes, and join Commander Hignett's flotilla, which is in attendance on *Stiletto*.'

A smothered chuckle greeted this last. Moorshed's voice was high and uneasy. Said Pyecroft, with a sigh: 'The amount o' trouble me an' my

bright spurs 'ad fishin' out that information from torpedo-coxswains and similar blighters in pubs, all this afternoon, you would never believe.'

'But has the *Stiletto* broken down?' I asked weakly.

'How else are we to get Red Fleet's private signal-code? Anyway, if she 'asn't now, she will before manœuvres are ended. It's only executin' in anticipation.'

'Go astern and send your coxswain aboard for orders, Mr. Jones.' Water carries sound well, but I do not know whether we were intended to hear the next sentence: 'They must have given him *one* intelligent keeper.'

'That's me,' said Mr. Pyecroft, as a black and coal-stained dinghy—I did not foresee how well I should come to know her—was flung overside by three men. 'Havin' bought an 'am, we will now see life.' He stepped into the boat and was away.

'I say, Podgie!'—the speaker was in the last of the line of destroyers, as we thumped astern—'aren't you lonely out there?'

'Oh, don't rag me!' said Moorshed. 'Do you suppose I'll have to manœuvre with your flo-tilla?'

'No, Podgie! 'I'm pretty sure our commander will see you sifting cinders in Tophet before you come with our flo-tilla.'

'Thank you! She steers rather wild at high speeds.'

Two men laughed together.

'By the way, who is Mr. Carteret-Jones when he's at home?' I whispered.

'I was with him in the *Britannia*. I didn't like him much, but I'm grateful to him now. I must tell him so some day.'

'They seemed to know him hereabouts.'

'He rammed the *Caryatid* twice with her own steam-pinnace.'

Presently, moved by long strokes, Mr. Pyecroft returned, skimming across the dark. The dinghy swung up behind him, even as his heel spurned it.

'Commander Fasset's compliments to Mr. L. Carteret-Jones, and the sooner he digs out in pursuance of Admiralty orders as received at Portsmouth, the better pleased Commander Fasset will be. But there's a lot more——'

'Whack her up, Mr. Hinchcliffe! Come on to the bridge. We can settle it as we go. Well?'

Mr. Pyecroft drew an important breath, and slid off his cap.

'Day an' night private signals of Red Fleet *com*plete, Sir!' He handed a little paper to Moorshed. 'You see, Sir, the trouble was, that Mr. Carteret-Jones bein', so to say, a little new to his

duties, 'ad forgot to give 'is gunner his Admiralty orders in writin', but, as I told Commander Fasset, Mr. Jones had been repeatin' 'em to me, nervous-like, most of the way from Portsmouth, so I knew 'em by heart—an' better. The Commander, recognisin' in me a man of agility, cautioned me to be a father an' mother to Mr. Carteret-Jones.'

'Didn't he know you?' I asked, thinking for the moment that there could be no duplicates of Emanuel Pyecroft in the Navy.

'What's a torpedo-gunner more or less to a full lootenant commandin' six thirty-knot destroyers for the first time? 'E seemed to cherish the 'ope that 'e might use the *Gnome* for 'is own 'orrible purposes; but what I told him about Mr. Jones's sad lack o' nerve comin' from Pompey, an' going dead slow on account of the dark, short-circuited *that* connection. "M'rover," I says to him, "our orders is explicit; *Stiletto's* reported broke down somewhere off the Start, an' we've been tryin' to coil down a new stiff wire hawser all the evenin', so it looks like towin' 'er back, don't it?" I says. That more than ever jams his turrets, an' makes him keen to get rid of us. 'E even hinted that Mr. Carteret-Jones passin' hawsers an' assistin' the impotent in a sea-way might come pretty expensive on the taxpayer. I agreed in a disciplined way. I ain't proud. Gawd knows I

ain't proud! But when I'm really diggin' out in the fancy line, I sometimes think that me in a copper punt, single-'anded, 'ud beat a cutter-full of De Rougemongs in a row round the fleet.'

At this point I reclined without shame on Mr. Pyecroft's bosom, supported by his quivering arm.

'Well?' said Moorshed, scowling into the darkness, as 267's bows snapped at the shore seas of the broader Channel, and we swayed together.

'"You'd better go on," says Commander Fasset, "an' do what you're told to do. I don't envy Hignett if he has to dry-nurse the *Gnome's* commander. But what d'you want with signals?" 'e says. "It's criminal lunacy to trust Mr. Jones with anything that steams."

'"May I make an observation, Sir?" I says. "Suppose," I says, "you was torpedo-gunner on the *Gnome*, an' Mr. Carteret-Jones was your commandin' officer, an' you had your reputation *as* a second in command for the first time," I says, well knowin' it was his first command of a flotilla, "what 'ud you do, Sir?" That gouged 'is unprotected ends open—clear back to the citadel.'

'What did he say?' Moorshed jerked over his shoulder.

'If you were Mr. Carteret-Jones, it might be disrespect for me to repeat it, Sir.'

'Go ahead,' I heard the boy chuckle.

'"Do?" 'e says. "I'd rub the young blighter's nose into it till I made a perishin' man of him, or a perspirin' pillow-case," 'e says, "which," he adds, "is forty per cent more than he is at present."

'Whilst he's gettin' the private signals—they're rather particular ones—I went forrard to see the *Dirk's* gunner about borrowin' a holdin'-down bolt for our twelve-pounder. My open ears, while I was rovin' over his packet, got the followin' authentic particulars.' I heard his voice change and his feet shifted. 'There's been a last council o' war of destroyer-captains at the flagship, an' a lot o' things 'as come out. To begin with, *Cryptic* and *Devolution*, Captain Panke and Captain Malan——'

'*Cryptic* and *Devolution*, first-class cruisers,' said Mr. Moorshed dreamily. 'Go on, Pyecroft.'

'—bein' delayed by minor defects in engine-room, did *not*, as we know, accompany Red Fleet's first division of scouting cruisers, whose rendezvous is unknown, but presumed to be somewhere off the Lizard. *Cryptic* an' *Devolution* left at 9.30 p.m. still reportin' copious minor defects in engine-room. Admiral's final instructions was they was to put into Torbay, an' mend themselves there. If they can do it in twenty-four hours, they're to come on and join the battle squadron at the first rendezvous, down Channel somewhere. (I couldn't get that,

Sir.) If they can't, he'll think about sendin' them some destroyers for escort. But his present intention is to go 'ammer and tongs down Channel, usin' 'is destroyers for all they're worth, an' thus keepin' Blue Fleet too busy off the Irish coast to sniff into any eshtuaries.'

'But if those cruisers are crocks, why does the Admiral let 'em out of Weymouth at all?' I asked.

'The taxpayer,' said Mr. Moorshed.

'An' newspapers,' added Mr. Pyecroft. 'In Torbay they'll look as they was muckin' about for strategical purposes—hammerin' like blazes in the engine-room all the weary day, an' the skipper droppin' questions down the engine-room hatch every two or three minutes. *I've* been there. Now, Sir?' I saw the white of his eye turn broad on Mr. Moorshed.

The boy dropped his chin over the speaking-tube.

'Mr. Hinchcliffe, what's her extreme economical radius?'

'Three hundred and forty knots, down to swept bunkers.'

'Can do,' said Moorshed. 'By the way, have her revolutions any bearing on her speed, Mr. Hinchcliffe?'

'None that I can make out yet, Sir.'

'Then slow to eight knots. We'll jog down to forty-nine, forty-five, or four about, and three east. That puts us say forty miles from Torbay by nine o'clock to-morrow morning. We'll have to muck about till dusk before we run in and try our luck with the cruisers.'

'Yes, Sir. Their picket boats will be panickin' round them all night. It's considered good for the young gentlemen.'

'Hallo! War's declared! They're off!' said Moorshed.

He swung 267's head round to get a better view. A few miles to our right the low horizon was spangled with small balls of fire, while nearer ran a procession of tiny cigar ends.

'Red hot! Set 'em alight,' said Mr. Pyecroft. 'That's the second destroyer flotilla diggin' out for Commander Fasset's reputation.'

The smaller lights disappeared; the glare of the destroyers' funnels dwindled even as we watched.

'They're going down Channel with lights out, thus showin' their zeal an' drivin' all watch-officers crazy. Now, if you'll excuse me, I think I'll get you your pyjamas, an' you'll turn in,' said Pyecroft.

He piloted me to the steel tunnel, where the ham still swung majestically over the swaying table,

and dragged out trousers and a coat with a monk's hood, all hewn from one hairy inch-thick board.

'If you fall over in these you'll be drowned. They're lammies. I'll chock you off with a pillow; but sleepin' in a torpedo-boat's what you might call an acquired habit.'

I coiled down on an iron-hard horse-hair pillow next the quivering steel wall to acquire that habit. The sea, sliding over 267's skin, worried me with importunate, half-caught confidences. It drummed tackily to gather my attention, coughed, spat, cleared its throat, and, on the eve of that portentous communication, retired up stage as a multitude whispering. Anon, I caught the tramp of armies afoot, the hum of crowded cities awaiting the event, the single sob of a woman, and dry roaring of wild beasts. A dropped shovel clanging on the stokehold floor was, naturally enough, the unbarring of arena gates; our sucking uplift across the crest of some little swell, nothing less than the haling forth of new worlds; our half-turning descent into the hollow of its mate, the abysmal plunge of God-forgotten planets. Through all these phenomena and more—though I ran with wild horses over illimitable plains of rustling grass; though I crouched belly-flat under appalling fires of musketry; though I was Livingstone, painless and incurious in the grip of his lion—my shut

eyes saw the lamp swinging in its gimbals, the irregularly gliding patch of light on the steel ladder, and every elastic shadow in the corners of the frail angle-irons; while my body strove to accommodate itself to the infernal vibration of the machine. At the last I rolled limply on the floor, and woke to real life with a bruised nose and a great call to go on deck at once.

'It's all right,' said a voice in my booming ears. 'Morgan and Laughton are worse than you!'

I was gripping a rail. Mr. Pyecroft pointed with his foot to two bundles beside a torpedo-tube, which at Weymouth had been a signaller and a most able seaman. 'She'd do better in a bigger sea,' said Mr. Pyecroft. 'This lop is what fetches it up.'

The sky behind us whitened as I laboured, and the first dawn drove down the Channel, tipping the wave-tops with a chill glare. To me that round wind which runs before the true day has ever been fortunate and of good omen. It cleared the trouble from my body, and set my soul dancing to 267's heel and toe across the northerly set of the waves—such waves as I had often watched contemptuously from the deck of a ten-thousand-ton liner. They shouldered our little hull sideways and passed, scalloped, and splayed out, toward the coast, carrying our white wake in loops along

their hollow backs. In succession we looked down a lead-gray cutting of water for half a clear mile, were flung up on its ridge, beheld the Channel traffic—full-sailed to that fair breeze—all about us, and swung slantwise, light as a bladder, elastic as a basket, into the next furrow. Then the sun found us, struck the wet gray bows to living, leaping opal, the colourless deep to hard sapphire, the many sails to pearl, and the little steam-plume of our escape to an inconstant rainbow.

'A fair day and a fair wind for all, thank God!' said Emanuel Pyecroft, throwing back the cowl-like hood of his blanket coat. His face was pitted with coal-dust and grime, pallid for lack of sleep; but his eyes shone like a gull's.

'I told you you'd see life. Think o' the *Pedantic* now. Think o' her Number One chasin' the mobilised gobbies round the lower deck flats. Think o' the pore little snotties now bein' washed, fed, and taught, an' the yeoman o' signals with a pink eye wakin' bright 'an brisk to another perishin' day of five-flag hoists. Whereas *we* shall caulk an' smoke cigarettes, same as the Spanish destroyers did for three weeks after war was declared.' He dropped into the wardroom singing:—

> If you're going to marry me, marry me, Bill,
> It's no use muckin' about!

The man at the wheel, uniformed in what had once been a Tam-o'-shanter, a pair of very worn R.M.L.I. trousers rolled up to the knee, and a black sweater, was smoking a cigarette. Moorshed, in a gray Balaclava and a brown mackintosh with a flapping cape, hauled at our supplementary funnel guys, and a thing like a waiter from a Soho restaurant sat at the head of the engine-room ladder exhorting the unseen below. The following wind beat down our smoke and covered all things with an inch-thick layer of stokers, so that eyelids, teeth, and feet gritted in their motions. I began to see that my previous experiences among battleships and cruisers had been altogether beside the mark.

PART II

The wind went down with the sunset—
  The fog came up with the tide,
When the Witch of the North took an Egg-shell (*bis*)
  With a little Blue Devil inside.
'Sink,' she said, 'or swim,' she said,
  'It's all you will get from me.
And that is the finish of him!' she said,
  And the Egg-shell went to sea.

The wind got up with the morning,
  And the fog blew off with the rain,
When the Witch of the North saw the Egg-shell
  And the little Blue Devil again.
'Did you swim?' she said. 'Did you sink?' she said,
  And the little Blue Devil replied:
'For myself I swam, but I think,' he said,
  'There's somebody sinking outside.'

BUT for the small detail that I was a passenger and a civilian, and might not alter her course, torpedo-boat No. 267 was mine to me all that priceless day. Moorshed, after breakfast—frizzled ham and a devil that Pyecroft made out of

sardines, anchovies, and French mustard smashed together with a spanner—showed me his few and simple navigating tools, and took an observation. Morgan, the signaller, let me hold the chamois leathers while he cleaned the searchlight (we seemed to be better equipped with electricity than most of our class), that lived under a bulbous umbrella-cover amidships. Then Pyecroft and Morgan, standing easy, talked together of the King's Service as reformers and revolutionists, so notably, that were I not engaged on this tale I would, for its conclusion, substitute theirs.

I would speak of Hinchcliffe—Henry Salt Hinchcliffe, first-class engine-room artificer, and genius in his line, who was prouder of having taken part in the Hat Crusade in his youth than of all his daring, his skill, and his nickel-steel nerve. I consorted with him for an hour in the packed and dancing engine-room, when Moorshed suggested 'whacking her up' to eighteen knots, to see if she would stand it. The floor was ankle-deep in a creamy batter of oil and water; each moving part flicking more oil in zoetrope-circles, and the gauges invisible for their dizzy chattering on the chattering steel bulkhead. Leading stoker Grant, said to be a bigamist, an ox-eyed man smothered in hair, took me to the stokehold and planted me between a searing white furnace and some hell-hot

iron plate for fifteen minutes, while I listened to the drone of fans and the worry of the sea without, striving to wrench all that palpitating firepot wide open.

Then I came on deck and watched Moorshed —revolving in his orbit from the canvas bustle and torpedo-tubes aft, by way of engine-room, conning-tower, and wheel, to the doll's house of a foc'sle—learned in experience withheld from me, moved by laws beyond my knowledge, authoritative, entirely adequate, and yet, in heart, a child at his play. *I* could not take ten steps along the crowded deck but I collided with some body or thing; but he and his satellites swung, passed, and returned on their vocations with the freedom and spaciousness of the well-poised stars.

Even now I can at will recall every tone and gesture, with each dissolving picture inboard or overside—Hinchcliffe's white arm buried to the shoulder in a hornet's nest of spinning machinery; Moorshed's halt and jerk to windward as he looked across the water; Pyecroft's back bent over the Berthon collapsible boat, while he drilled three men in expanding it swiftly; the outflung white water at the foot of a homeward-bound Chinaman not a hundred yards away, and her shadow-slashed, rope-purfled sails bulging sideways like insolent cheeks; the ribbed and pitted coal-

dust on our decks, all iridescent under the sun; the first filmy haze that paled the shadows of our funnels about lunch-time; the gradual die-down and dulling over of the short, cheery seas; the sea that changed to a swell; the swell that crumbled up and ran allwhither oilily; the triumphant, almost audible roll inward of wandering fog-walls that had been stalking us for two hours, and—welt upon welt, chill as the grave—the drive of the interminable main fog of the Atlantic. We slowed to little more than steerage-way and lay listening. Presently a hand-bellows foghorn jarred like a corncrake, and there rattled out of the mist a big ship literally above us. We could count the rivets in her plates as we scrooped by, and the little drops of dew gathered below them.

'Wonder why they're always barks—always steel—always four-masted—an' never less than two thousand tons. But they are,' said Pyecroft. He was out on the turtle-backed bows of her; Moorshed was at the wheel, and another man worked the whistle.

'This fog is the best thing could ha' happened to us,' said Moorshed. 'It gives us our chance to run in on the quiet. . . . Hal-lo!'

A cracked bell rang. Clean and sharp (beautifully grained, too), a bowsprit surged over our

starboard bow, the bobstay confidentially hooking itself into our forward rail.

I saw Pyecroft's arm fly up; heard at the same moment the severing of the tense rope, the working of the wheel, Moorshed's voice down the tube saying, 'Astern a little, please, Mr. Hinchcliffe!' and Pyecroft's cry, 'Trawler with her gear down! Look out for our propeller, Sir, or we'll be wrapped up in the rope.'

267 surged quickly under my feet, as the pressure of the downward-bearing bobstay was removed. Half-a-dozen men of the foc'sle had already thrown out fenders, and stood by to bear off a just visible bulwark.

Still going astern, we touched slowly, broadside on, to a suggestive crunching of fenders, and I looked into the deck of a Brixham trawler, her crew struck dumb.

'Any luck?' said Moorshed politely.

'Not till we met yeou,' was the answer. 'The Lard he saved us from they big ships to be spitted by the little wan. Where be'e gwine tu with our fine new bobstay?'

'Yah! You've had time to splice it by now,' said Pyecroft with contempt.

'Aie; but we'm all crushed to port like aigs. You was runnin' twenty-seven knots, us reckoned it. Didn't us, Albert?'

'Liker twenty-nine, an' niver no whistle.'

'Yes, we always do that. Do you want a tow to Brixham?' said Moorshed.

A great silence fell upon those wet men of the sea.

We lifted a little toward their side, but our silent, quick-breathing crew, braced and strained outboard, bore us off as though we had been a mere picket-boat.

'What for?' said a puzzled voice.

'For love; for nothing. You'll be abed in Brixham by midnight.'

'Yiss; but trawl's down.'

'No hurry. I'll pass you a line and go ahead. Sing out when you're ready.' A rope smacked on their deck with the word; they made it fast; we slid forward, and in ten seconds saw nothing save a few feet of the wire-rope running into fog over our stern; but we heard the noise of debate.

'Catch a Brixham trawler letting go of a free tow in a fog,' said Moorshed, listening.

'But what in the world do you want him for?' I asked.

'Oh, he'll come in handy later.'

'Was that your first collision?'

'Yes.' I shook hands with him in silence, and our tow hailed us.

'Aie! yeou little man-o'-war!' The voice

rose muffled and wailing. 'After us've upped trawl, us'll be glad of a tow. Leave line just slack abaout as 'tis now, and kip a good fine look-out be'ind 'ee.'

'There's an accommodatin' blighter for you!' said Pyecroft. 'Where does he expect we'll be, with these currents evolutin' like sailormen at the Agricultural Hall?'

I left the bridge to watch the wire-rope at the stern as it drew out and smacked down upon the water. By what instinct or guidance 267 kept it from fouling her languidly flapping propeller, I cannot tell. The fog now thickened and thinned in streaks that bothered the eyes like the glare of intermittent flash-lamps; by turns granting us the vision of a sick sun that leered and fled, or burying all a thousand fathom deep in gulfs of vapours. At no time could we see the trawler though we heard the click of her windlass, the jar of her trawl-beam, and the very flap of the fish on her deck. Forward was Pyecroft with the lead; on the bridge Moorshed pawed a Channel chart; aft sat I, listening to the whole of the British Mercantile Marine (never a keel less) returning to England, and watching the fog-dew run round the bight of the tow back to its mother-fog.

'Aie! yeou little man-o'-war! We'm done

with trawl. You can take us home if you know the road.'

'Right O!' said Moorshed. 'We'll give the fishmonger a run for his money. Whack her up, Mr. Hinchcliffe.'

The next few hours completed my education. I saw that I ought to be afraid, but more clearly (this was when a liner hooted down the back of my neck) that any fear which would begin to do justice to the situation would, if yielded to, incapacitate me for the rest of my days. A shadow of spread sails, deeper than the darkening twilight, brooding over us like the wings of Azrael (Pyecroft said she was a Swede), and, miraculously withdrawn, persuaded me that there was a working chance that I should reach the beach—any beach—alive, if not dry; and (this was when an economical tramp laved our port-rail with her condenser water) were I so spared, I vowed I would tell my tale worthily.

Thus we floated in space as souls drift through raw time. Night added herself to the fog, and I laid hold on my limbs jealously, lest they, too, should melt in the general dissolution.

'Where's that prevaricatin' fishmonger?' said Pyecroft, turning a lantern on a scant yard of the gleaming wire-rope that pointed like a stick to my left. 'He's doin' some fancy steerin' on his

own. No wonder Mr. Hinchcliffe is blasphemious. The tow's sheered off to starboard, Sir. He'll fair pull the stern out of us.'

Moorshed, invisible, cursed through the megaphone into invisibility.

'Aie! yeou little man-o'-war!' The voice butted through the fog with the monotonous insistence of a strayed sheep's. 'We don't all like the road you'm takin'. 'Tis no road to Brixham. You'll be buckled up under Prawle Point by'mbye.'

'Do you pretend to know where you are?' the megaphone roared.

'Iss, I reckon; but there's no pretence to me!'

'O Peter!' said Pyecroft. 'Let's hang him at 'is own gaff.'

I could not see what followed, but Moorshed said: 'Take another man with you. If you lose the tow, you're done. I'll slow her down.'

I heard the dinghy splash overboard ere I could cry 'Murder!' Heard the rasp of a boat-hook along the wire-rope, and then, as it had been in my ear, Pyecroft's enormous and jubilant bellow astern: 'Why, he's here! Right atop of us! The blighter 'as pouched half the tow, like a shark!' A long pause filled with soft Devonian bleatings. Then Pyecroft, *solo arpeggie*: 'Rum? Rum? Rum? Is that all? Come an' try it, uncle.'

I lifted my face to where once God's sky had been, and besought The Trues I might not die inarticulate, amid these half-worked miracles, but live at least till my fellow-mortals could be made one-millionth as happy as I was happy. I prayed and I waited, and we went slow—slow as the processes of evolution—till the boat-hook rasped again.

'He's not what you might call a scientific navigator,' said Pyecroft, still in the dinghy, but rising like a fairy from a pantomime trap. 'The lead's what 'e goes by mostly; rum is what he's come for; an' Brixham is 'is 'ome. Lay on, Macduff!'

A white-whiskered man in a frock-coat—as I live by bread, a frock-coat!—sea-boots, and a comforter, crawled over the torpedo-tube into Moorshed's grip and vanished forward.

''E'll probably 'old three gallon (look sharp with that dinghy!); but 'is nephew, left in charge of the *Agatha*, wants two bottles command-allowance. You're a taxpayer, Sir. Do you think that excessive?'

'Lead there! Lead!' rang out from forward.

'Didn't I say 'e wouldn' understand compass deviations? Watch him close. It'll be worth it!'

As I neared the bridge I heard the stranger say: 'Let me zmell un!' and to his nose was the

lead presented by a trained man of the King's Navy.

'I'll tell 'ee where to goo, if yeou'll tell your donkey-man what to du. I'm no hand wi' steam.' On these lines we proceeded miraculously, and, under Moorshed's orders—I was the fisherman's Ganymede, even as 'M de C.' had served the captain—I found both rum and curaçoa in a locker, and mixed them equal bulk in an enamelled iron cup.

'Now we'm just abeam o' where we should be,' he said at last, 'an' here we'll lay till she lifts. I'd take 'e in for another bottle—and wan for my nevvy; but I reckon yeou'rn shart-allowanced for rum. That's nivver no Navy rum yeou'm give me. Knowed 'ee by the smack tu un. Anchor now!'

I was between Pyecroft and Moorshed on the bridge, and heard them spring to vibrating attention at my side. A man with a lead a few feet to port caught the panic through my body, and checked like a wild boar at gaze, for not far away an unmistakable ship's bell was ringing. It ceased, and another began.

'Them!' said Pyecroft. 'Anchored!'

'More!' said our pilot, passing me the cup, and I filled it. The trawler astern clattered vehemently on her bell. Pyecroft with a jerk of

his arm threw loose the forward three-pounder. The bar of the back-sight was heavily blobbed with dew; the foresight was invisible.

'No—they wouldn't have their picket-boats out in this weather, though they ought to.' He returned the barrel to its crotch slowly.

'Be yeou gwine to anchor?' said Macduff, smacking his lips, 'or be yeou gwine straight on to Livermead Beach?'

'Tell him what we're driving at. Get it into his head somehow,' said Moorshed; and Pye-croft, snatching the cup from me, enfolded the old man with an arm and a mist of wonderful words.

'And if you pull it off,' said Moorshed at the last, 'I'll give you a fiver.'

'Lard! What's fivers to me, young man? My nevvy, he likes 'em; but I do cherish more on fine drink than filthy lucre any day o' God's good weeks. Leave goo my arm, yeou common sailorman! I tall 'ee, gentlemen, I bain't the ram-faced, ruddle-nosed old fule yeou reckon I be. Before the mast I've fared in my time; fisherman I've been since I seed the unsense of sea-dangerin'. Baccy and spirits—yiss, an' cigars too, I've run a plenty. I'm no blind harse or boy to be coaxed with your forty-mile free towin' and rum atop of all. There's none more sober to Brix'am this tide,

I don't care who 'tis—than me. *I* know—*I* know. Yander'm two great King's ships. Yeou'm wishful to sink, burn, and destroy they while us kips 'em busy sellin' fish. No need tall me so twanty taime over. Us'll find they ships! Us'll find 'em, if us has to break our fine new bowsprit so close as Crump's bull's horn!'

'Good egg!' quoth Moorshed, and brought his hand down on the wide shoulders with the smack of a beaver's tail.

'Us'll go look for they by hand. Us'll give they something to play upon; an' do 'ee deal with them faithfully, an' may the Lard have mercy on your sowls! Amen. Put I in dinghy again.'

The fog was as dense as ever—we moved in the very womb of night—but I cannot recall that I took the faintest note of it as the dinghy, guided by the tow-rope, disappeared toward the *Agatha*, Pyecroft rowing. The bell began again on the starboard bow.

'We're pretty near,' said Moorshed, slowing down. 'Out with the Berthon. (*We'll* sell 'em fish, too.) And if any one rows Navy-stroke, I'll break his jaw with the tiller. Mr. Hinchcliffe' (this down the tube), 'you'll stay here in charge with Gregory and Shergold and the engine-room staff. Morgan stays, too, for signalling purposes.'

A deep groan broke from Morgan's chest, but he said nothing. 'If the fog thins and you're seen by any one, keep 'em quiet with the signals. I can't think of the precise lie just now, but *you* can, Morgan.'

'Yes, Sir.'

'Suppose their torpedo-nets are down?' I whispered, shivering with excitement.

'If they've been repairing minor defects all day, they won't have any one to spare from the engine-room, and "Out nets!" is a job for the whole ship's company. I expect they've trusted to the fog—like us. Well, Pyecroft?'

That great soul had blown up on to the bridge like a feather. ''Ad to see the first o' the rum into the *Agathites*, Sir. They was a bit jealous o' their commandin' officer comin' 'ome so richly lacquered, and at first the *conversazione* languished, as you might say. But they sprang to attention ere I left. Six sharp strokes on the bells, if any of 'em are sober enough to keep tally, will be the signal that our consort 'as cast off her tow an' is manœuvrin' on 'er own.'

'Right O! Take Laughton with you in the dinghy. Put that Berthon over quietly there! Are you all right, Mr. Hinchcliffe?'

I stood back to avoid the rush of half-a-dozen shadows dropping into the Berthon boat. A hand

caught me by the slack of my garments, moved me in generous arcs through the night, and I rested on the bottom of the dinghy.

'I want you for *prima facie* evidence, in case the vaccination don't take,' said Pyecroft in my ear. 'Push off, Alf!'

The last bell-ringing was high overhead. It was followed by six little tinkles from the *Agatha*, the roar of her falling anchor, the clash of pans, and loose shouting.

'Where be gwine tu? Port your 'ellum. Aie! you mud-dredger in the fairway, goo astern! Out boats! She'll sink us!'

A clear-cut Navy voice drawled from the clouds: 'Quiet! you gardeners there. This is the *Cryptic* at anchor.'

'Thank you for the range,' said Pyecroft, and paddled gingerly. 'Feel well out in front of you, Alf. Remember your fat fist is our only Marconi installation.'

The voices resumed:

'Bournemouth steamer he says she be.'

'Then where be Brixham Harbor?'

'Damme, I'm a taxpayer tu. They've no right to cruise about this way. I'll have the laa on 'ee if anything carries away.'

Then the man-of-war:

'Short on your anchor! Heave short, you

howling maniacs! You'll get yourselves smashed in a minute if you drift.'

The air was full of these and other voices as the dinghy, checking, swung. I passed one hand down Laughton's stretched arm and felt an iron gooseneck and a foot or two of a backward-sloping torpedo-net boom. The other hand I laid on broad, cold iron—even the flank of H.M.S. *Cryptic*, which is twelve thousand tons.

I heard a scrubby, raspy sound, as though Pyecroft had chosen that hour to shave, and I smelled paint. 'Drop aft a bit, Alf; we'll put a stencil under the stern six-inch casements.'

Boom by boom Laughton slid the dinghy along the towering curved wall. Once, twice, and again we stopped, and the keen scrubbing sound was renewed.

'Umpires are 'ard-'earted blighters, but this ought to convince 'em. . . . Captain Panke's stern-walk is now above our defenceless 'eads. Repeat the evolution up the starboard side, Alf.'

I was only conscious that we moved around an iron world palpitating with life. Though my knowledge was all by touch—as, for example, when Pyecroft led my surrendered hand to the base of some bulging sponson, or when my palm closed on the knife-edge of the stem and patted it timidly—yet I felt lonely and unprotected as the

enormous, helpless ship was withdrawn, and we drifted away into the void where voices sang:

Tom Pearce, Tom Pearce, lend me thy gray mare,
All along, out along, down along lea!
I want for to go to Widdicombe Fair
With Bill Brewer, Sam Sewer, Peter Gurney, Harry Hawke,
Old Uncle Tom Cobbley an' all!

'That's old Sinbad an' 'is little lot from the *Agatha*! Give way, Alf! *You* might sing somethin', too.'

'I'm no burnin' Patti. Ain't there noise enough for you, Pye?'

'Yes, but it's only amateurs. Give me the tones of 'earth and 'ome. Ha! List to the blighter on the 'orizon sayin' his prayers, Navy-fashion. 'Eaven 'elp me argue that way when I'm a warrant-officer!'

We headed with little lapping strokes toward what seemed to be a fair-sized riot.

'An' I've 'eard the *Devolution* called a happy ship, too,' said Pyecroft. 'Just shows 'ow a man's misled by prejudice. She's peevish—that's what she is—nasty-peevish. Prob'ly all because the *Agathites* are scratching 'er paint. Well, rub along, Alf. I've got the lymph!'

A voice, which Mr. Pyecroft assured me belonged to a chief carpenter, was speaking through an aperture (starboard bow, twelve-

pounder on the lower deck). He did not wish to purchase any fish, even at grossly reduced rates. Nobody wished to buy any fish. This ship was the *Devolution* at anchor, and desired no communication with shore boats.

'Mark how the Navy 'olds its own. He's sober. The *Agathites* are not, as you might say, an' yet they can't live with 'im. It's the discipline that does it. 'Ark to the bald an' unconvincin' watch-officer chimin' in. I wonder where Mr. Moorshed has got to?'

We drifted down the *Devolution's* side, as we had drifted down her sister's; and we dealt with her in that dense gloom as we had dealt with her sister.

'Whai! 'Tis a man-o'-war, after all! I can see the captain's whisker all gilt at the edges! We took 'ee for the Bournemouth steamer. Three cheers for the real man-o'-war!'

That cry came from under the *Devolution's* stern. Pyecroft held something in his teeth, for I heard him mumble, 'Our Mister Moorshed!'

Said a boy's voice above us, just as we dodged a jet of hot water from some valve: 'I don't half like that cheer. If I'd been the old man I'd ha' turned loose the quick-firers at the first go-off. Aren't they rowing Navy-stroke, yonder?'

'True,' said Pyecroft, listening to retreating oars. 'It's time to go 'ome when snotties begin to think. The fog's thinnin', too.'

I felt a chill breath on my forehead, and saw a few feet of the steel stand out darker than the darkness, disappear—it was then the dinghy shot away from it—and emerge once more.

'Hallo! what boat's that?' said the voice suspiciously.

'Why, I do believe it's a real man-o'-war, after all,' said Pyecroft, and kicked Laughton.

'What's that for?' Laughton was no dramatist.

'Answer in character, you blighter! Say somethin' opposite.'

'What boat's *thatt*?' The hail was repeated.

'What do yee say-ay?' Pyecroft bellowed, and, under his breath to me: 'Give us a hand.'

'It's called the *Marietta*—F. J. Stokes—Torquay,' I began, quaveringly. 'At least that's the name on the name-board. I've been dining—on a yacht.'

'I see.' The voice shook a little, and my way opened before me with disgraceful ease.

'Yesh. Dining private yacht. *Eshmesheralda*. I belong to Torquay Yacht Club. *Are* you member Torquay Yacht Club?'

'You'd better go to bed, Sir. Good-night.' We slid into the rapidly thinning fog.

'Dig out, Alf. Put your *nix mangiare* back into it. The fog's peelin' off like a petticoat. Where's Two Six Seven?'

'I can't see her,' I replied, 'but there's a light low down ahead.'

'The *Agatha*!' They rowed desperately through the uneasy dispersal of the fog for ten minutes and ducked round the trawler's bow.

'Well, Emanuel means "God with us"—so far.' Pyecroft wiped his brow, laid a hand on the low rail, and as he boosted me up to the trawler, I saw Moorshed's face, white as pearl in the thinning dark.

'Was it all right?' said he, over the bulwarks.

'Vaccination ain't in it. She's took beautiful. But where's 267, Sir?' Pyecroft replied.

'Gone. We came here as the fog lifted. I gave the *Devolution* four. Was that you behind us?'

'Yes, sir; but I only got in three on the *Devolution*. I gave the *Cryptic* nine, though. They're what you might call more or less vaccinated.'

He lifted me inboard, where Moorshed and six pirates lay round the *Agatha's* hatch. There was a hint of daylight in the cool air.

'Where is the old man?' I asked.

'Still selling 'em fish, I suppose. He's a

darling! But I wish I could get this filthy paint off my hands. Hallo! What the deuce is the *Cryptic* signalling?'

A pale masthead light winked through the last of the fog. It was answered by a white pencil to the southward.

'Destroyer signallin' with searchlight.' Pyecroft leaped on the stern-rail. 'The first part is private signals. Ah! now she's Morsing against the fog. "P-O-S-T—yes, postpone"—"D-E-P- (go on!) departure — till — further — orders — which—will—be com (he's dropped the other m) unicated—verbally. End." He swung round. '*Cryptic* is now answering: "Ready—proceed—immediately. What—news—promised—destroyer—flotilla?"'

'Hallo!' said Moorshed. 'Well, never mind. They'll come too late.'

'Whew! That's some 'igh-born suckling on the destroyer. Destroyer signals: "Care not. All will be known later." What merry beehive's broken loose now?'

'What odds! We've done our little job.'

'Why—why—it's Two Six Seven!'

Here Pyecroft dropped from the rail among the fishy nets and shook the *Agatha* with heavings. Moorshed cast aside his cigarette, looked over the stern, and fell into his subordinate's arms. I heard

the guggle of engines, the rattle of a little anchor going over not a hundred yards away, a cough, and Morgan's subdued hail. . . . So far as I remember, it was Laughton whom I hugged; but the men who hugged me most were Pyecroft and Moorshed, adrift among the fishy nets.

There was no semblance of discipline in our flight over the *Agatha's* side, nor, indeed, were ordinary precautions taken for the common safety, because (I was in the Berthon) they held that patent boat open by hand for the most part. We regained our own craft, cackling like wild geese, and crowded round Moorshed and Hinchcliffe. Behind us the *Agatha's* boat, returning from her fish-selling cruise, yelled: 'Have 'ee done the trick? Have 'ee done the trick?' and we could only shout hoarsely over the stern, guaranteeing them rum by the hold-full.

'Fog got patchy here at 12.27,' said Henry Salt Hinchcliffe, growing clearer every instant in the dawn. 'Went down to Brixham Harbour to keep out of the road. Heard whistles to the south and went to look. I had her up to sixteen good. Morgan kept on shedding private Red Fleet signals out of the signal-book, as the fog cleared, till we was answered by three destroyers. Morgan signalled 'em by searchlight: "Alter course to South Seventeen East, so as not to lose

time." They came round quick. We kept well away—on their port beam—and Morgan gave 'em their orders.' He looked at Morgan and coughed.

'The signalman, acting as second in command,' said Morgan, swelling, 'then informed destroyer flotilla that *Cryptic* and *Devolution* had made good defects, and, in obedience to Admiral's supplementary orders (I was afraid they might suspect that, but they didn't), had proceeded at seven knots at 11.23 p.m. to rendezvous near Channel Islands, seven miles N.N.W. the Casquet light. (I've rendezvoused there myself, Sir.) Destroyer flotilla would therefore follow cruisers and catch up with them on their course. Destroyer flotilla then dug out on course indicated, all funnels sparking briskly.'

'Who were the destroyers?'

'*Wraith*, *Kobbold*, *Stiletto*, Lieutenant-Commander A. L. Hignett, acting under Admiral's orders to escort cruisers received off the Dodman at 7 p.m. They'd come slow on account of fog.'

'Then who were you?'

'We were the *Afrite*, port-engine broke down, put in to Torbay, and there instructed by *Cryptic*, previous to her departure with *Devolution*, to inform Commander Hignett of change of plans. Lieutenant-Commander Hignett signalled that our

meeting was quite providential. After this we returned to pick up our commanding officer, and being interrogated by *Cryptic*, marked time signalling as requisite, which you may have seen. The *Agatha* representing the last known rallying-point —or, as I should say, pivot-ship of the evolution— it was decided to repair to the *Agatha* at conclusion of manœuvre.'

We breathed deeply, all of us, but no one spoke a word till Moorshed said: 'Is there such a thing as one fine big drink aboard this one fine big battleship?'

'Can do, Sir,' said Pyecroft, and got it. Beginning with Mr. Moorshed and ending with myself, junior to the third first-class stoker, we drank, and it was as water of the brook, that two and a half inches of stiff, treacly Navy rum. And we looked each in the other's face, and we nodded, bright-eyed, burning with bliss.

Moorshed walked aft to the torpedo-tubes and paced back and forth, a captain victorious on his own quarter-deck; and the triumphant day broke over the green-bedded villas of Torquay to show us the magnitude of our victory. There lay the cruisers (I have reason to believe that they had made good their defects). They were each four hundred and forty feet long and sixty-six wide; they held close upon eight hundred men apiece,

and they had cost, say, a million and a half the pair. And they were ours, and they did not know it. Indeed, the *Cryptic*, senior ship, was signalling vehement remarks to our address, which we did not notice.

'If you take these glasses, you'll get the general run o' last night's vaccination,' said Pyecroft. 'Each one represents a torpedo got 'ome, as you might say.'

I saw on the *Cryptic's* port side, as she lay half a mile away across the glassy water, four neat white squares in outline, a white blur in the centre.

'There are five more to starboard. 'Ere's the original!' He handed me a paint-dappled copper stencil-plate, two feet square, bearing in the centre the six-inch initials, 'G.M.'

'Ten minutes ago I'd ha' eulogised about that little trick of ours, but Morgan's performance has short-circuited me. Are you happy, Morgan?'

'Bustin',' said the signalman briefly.

'You may be. Gawd forgive you, Morgan, for as Queen 'Enrietta said to the 'ousemaid, *I* never will. I'd ha' given a year's pay for ten minutes o' your signallin' work this mornin'.'

'I wouldn't 'ave took it up,' was the answer. 'Perishin' 'Eavens above! Look at the *Devolu-*

tion's semaphore!' Two black wooden arms waved from the junior ship's upper bridge. 'They've seen it.'

'*The* mote *on* their neighbour's beam, of course,' said Pyecroft, and read syllable by syllable: '"Captain Malan to Captain Panke. Is—sten—cilled—frieze your starboard side new Admiralty regulation, or your Number One's private expense?" Now *Cryptic* is saying, "Not understood." Poor old *Crippy*, the *Devolute's* raggin' 'er sore. "Who is G.M.?" she says. That's fetched the *Cryptic*. She's answerin': "You ought to know. Examine own paintwork." Oh Lord! they're both on to it now. This is balm! This is beginning to be balm! I forgive you, Morgan!'

Two frantic pipes twittered. From either cruiser a whaler dropped into the water and madly rowed round the ship, as a gay-coloured hoist rose to the *Cryptic's* yardarm: 'Destroyer will close at once. Wish to speak by semaphore.' Then on the bridge semaphore itself: 'Have been trying to attract your attention last half-hour. Send commanding officer aboard at once.'

'Our attention? After all the attention we've given 'er, too,' said Pyecroft. 'What a greedy old woman!' To Moorshed: 'Signal from the *Cryptic*, Sir.'

'Never mind that!' said the boy, peering

through his glasses. 'Out dinghy quick, or they'll paint our marks out. Come along!'

By this time I was long past even hysteria. I remember Pyecroft's bending back, the surge of the driven dinghy, a knot of amazed faces as we skimmed the *Cryptic's* ram, and the dropped jaw of the midshipman in her whaler when we barged fairly into him.

'Mind my paint!' he yelled.

'You mind mine, snotty,' said Moorshed. 'I was all night putting these little ear-marks on you for the umpires to sit on. Leave 'em alone.'

We splashed past him to the *Devolution's* boat, where sat no one less than her first lieutenant, a singularly unhandy-looking officer.

'What the deuce is the meaning of this?' he roared, with an accusing forefinger.

'You're sunk, that's all. You've been dead half a tide.'

'Dead, am I? I'll show you whether I'm dead or not, Sir!'

'Well, you may be a survivor,' said Moorshed ingratiatingly, 'though it isn't at all likely.'

The officer choked for a minute. The midshipman crouched up in stern said, half aloud: 'Then I *was* right—last night.'

'Yesh,' I gasped from the dinghy's coal-dust. 'Are you member Torquay Yacht Club?'

'Hell!' said the first lieutenant, and fled away. The *Cryptic's* boat was already at that cruiser's side, and semaphores flicked zealously from ship to ship. We floated, a minute speck, between the two hulls, while the pipes went for the captain's galley on the *Devolution.*

'That's all right,' said Moorshed. 'Wait till the gangway's down and then board her decently. We oughtn't to be expected to climb up a ship we've sunk.'

Pyecroft lay on his disreputable oars till Captain Malan, full-uniformed, descended the *Devolution's* side. With due compliments—not acknowledged, I grieve to say—we fell in behind his sumptuous galley, and at last, upon pressing invitation, climbed, black as sweeps all, the lowered gangway of the *Cryptic.* At the top stood as fine a constellation of marine stars as ever sang together of a morning on a King's ship. Every one who could get within earshot found that his work took him aft. I counted eleven able seamen polishing the breech-block of the stern nine-point-two, four marines zealously relieving each other at the life-buoy, six call-boys, nine midshipmen of the watch, exclusive of naval cadets, and the higher ranks past all census.

'If I die o' joy,' said Pyecroft behind his hand, 'remember I died forgivin' Morgan from the

bottom of my 'eart, because, like Martha, we 'ave scoffed the better part. You'd better try to come to attention, Sir.'

Moorshed ran his eye voluptuously over the upper deck battery, the huge beam, and the immaculate perspective of power. Captain Panke and Captain Malan stood on the well-browned flash-plates by the dazzling hatch. Precisely over the flagstaff I saw Two Six Seven astern, her black petticoat half hitched up, meekly floating on the still sea. She looked like the pious Abigail who has just spoken her mind, and, with folded hands, sits thanking Heaven among the pieces. I could almost have sworn that she wore black worsted gloves and had a little dry cough. But it was Captain Panke that coughed so austerely. He favoured us with a lecture on uniform, deportment, and the urgent necessity of answering signals from a senior ship. He told us that he disapproved of masquerading, that he loved discipline, and would be obliged by an explanation. And while he delivered himself deeper and more deeply into our hands, I saw Captain Malan wince. He was watching Moorshed's eye.

'I belong to Blue Fleet, Sir. I command Number Two Six Seven,' said Moorshed, and Captain Panke was dumb. 'Have you such a thing as a frame-plan of the *Cryptic* aboard?'

He spoke with winning politeness as he opened a small and neatly folded paper.

'I have, Sir.' The little man's face was working with passion.

'Ah! Then I shall be able to show you precisely where you were torpedoed last night in'—he consulted the paper with one finely arched eyebrow—'in nine places. And since the *Devolution* is, I understand, a sister ship'—he bowed slightly toward Captain Malan—'the same plan—'

I had followed the clear precision of each word with a dumb amazement which seemed to leave my mind abnormally clear. I saw Captain Malan's eye turn from Moorshed and seek that of the *Cryptic's* commander. And he telegraphed as clearly as Moorshed was speaking: 'My dear friend and brother officer, *I* know Panke; *you* know Panke; *we* know Panke—good little Panke! In less than three Greenwich chronometer seconds Panke will make an enormous ass of himself, and I shall have to put things straight, unless you who are a man of tact and discernment—'

'Carry on.' The Commander's order supplied the unspoken word. The cruiser boiled about her business around us; watch and watch officers together, up to the limit of noise permissible. I saw Captain Malan turn to his senior.

'Come to my cabin!' said Panke gratingly,

and led the way. Pyecroft and I stayed still.

'It's all right,' said Pyecroft. 'They daren't leave us loose aboard for one revolution,' and I knew that he had seen what I had seen.

'You, too!' said Captain Malan, returning suddenly. We passed the sentry between white enamelled walls of speckless small-arms, and since that Royal Marine Light Infantryman was visibly suffocating from curiosity, I winked at him. We entered the chintz-adorned, photo-speckled, brass-fendered, tile-stoved main cabin. Moorshed, with a ruler, was demonstrating before the frame-plan of H.M.S. *Cryptic*.

'—making nine stencils in all of my initials G.M.,' I heard him say. 'Further, you will find attached to your rudder, and you, too, Sir'—he bowed to Captain Malan yet again—'one fourteen-inch Mark IV practice torpedo, as issued to first-class torpedo-boats, properly buoyed. I have sent full particulars by telegraph to the umpires, and have requested them to judge on the facts as they —appear.' He nodded through the large window to the stencilled *Devolution* awink with brass-work in the morning sun, and ceased.

Captain Panke faced us. I remembered that this was only play, and caught myself wondering with what keener agony comes the real defeat.

'Good God, Johnny!' he said, dropping his lower lip like a child, 'this young pup says he has put us both out of action. Inconceivable—eh? My first command of one of the class. Eh? What shall we do with him? What shall we do with him—eh?'

'As far as I can see, there's no getting over the stencils,' his companion answered.

'Why didn't I have the nets down? Why didn't I have the nets down?' The cry tore itself from Captain Panke's chest as he twisted his hands.

'I suppose we'd better wait and find out what the umpires will say. The Admiral won't be exactly pleased.' Captain Malan spoke very soothingly. Moorshed looked out through the stern door at Two Six Seven. Pyecroft and I, at attention, studied the paintwork opposite. Captain Panke had dropped into his desk chair, and scribbled nervously at a blotting-pad.

Just before the tension became unendurable, he looked at his junior for a lead. 'What—what are you going to do about it, Johnny—eh?'

'Well, if you don't want him, I'm going to ask this young gentleman to breakfast, and then we'll make and mend clothes till the umpires have decided.'

Captain Panke flung out a hand swiftly.

'Come with me,' said Captain Malan. 'Your men had better go back in the dinghy to—their—own—ship.'

'Yes, I think so,' said Moorshed, and passed out behind the captain. We followed at a respectful interval, waiting till they had ascended the ladder.

Said the sentry, rigid as the naked barometer behind him: 'For Gawd's sake! 'Ere, come 'ere! For Gawd's sake! What's 'appened? Oh! come *'ere* an' tell.'

'Tell? You?' said Pyecroft. Neither man's lips moved, and the words were whispers: 'Your ultimate illegitimate grandchildren might begin to understand, not you—nor ever will.'

'Captain Malan's galley away, Sir,' cried a voice above; and one replied: 'Then get those two greasers into their dinghy and hoist the blue peter. We're out of action.'

'Can you do it, Sir?' said Pyecroft at the foot of the ladder. 'Do you think it is in the English language, or do you not?'

'I don't think I can, but I'll try. If it takes me two years, I'll try.'

. . . . .

There are witnesses who can testify that I have used no artifice. I have, on the contrary, cut away priceless slabs of *opus alexandrinum*. My gold I

have lacquered down to dull bronze, my purples overlaid with sepia of the sea, and for hell-hearted ruby and blinding diamond I have substituted pale amethyst and mere jargoon. Because I would say again 'Disregarding the inventions of the Marine Captain whose other name is Gubbins, let a plain statement suffice.'

THE COMPREHENSION OF PRIVATE COPPER

THE KING'S TASK

After the sack of the City, when Rome was sunk to a name,
In the years when the Lights were darkened, or ever Saint Wilfrid came,
Low on the borders of Britain, the ancient poets sing,
Between the cliff and the forest there ruled a Saxon king.

Stubborn all were his people, a stark and a jealous horde—
Not to be schooled by the cudgel, scarce to be cowed by the sword;
Blithe to turn at their pleasure, bitter to cross in their mood,
And set on the ways of their choosing as the hogs of Andred's Wood. . . .

They made them laws in the Witan, the laws of flaying and fine,
Folkland, common and pannage, the theft and the track of kine;
Statutes of tun and of market for the fish and the malt and the meal,
The tax on the Bramber packhorse and the tax on the Hastings keel.
Over the graves of the Druids and over the wreck of Rome
Rudely but deeply they bedded the plinth of the days to come.
Behind the feet of the Legions and before the Northman's ire,
Rudely but greatly begat they the body of state and of shire.
Rudely but greatly they laboured, and their labour stands till now
If we trace on our ancient headlands the twist of their eight-ox plough.

THE COMPREHENSION OF PRIVATE COPPER

PRIVATE COPPER'S father was a Southdown shepherd; in early youth Copper had studied under him. Five years' army service had somewhat blunted Private Copper's pastoral instincts, but it occurred to him as a memory of the Chalk that sheep, or in this case buck, do not move towards one across turf, or in this case the Colesberg kopjes, unless a stranger, or in this case an enemy, is in the neighbourhood. Copper, helmet back-first, advanced with caution, leaving his mates of the picket full a mile behind. The picket, concerned for its evening meal, did not protest. A year ago it would have been an officer's command, moving as such. To-day it paid casual allegiance to a Canadian, nominally a sergeant, actually a trooper of Irregular Horse, discovered convalescent in Naauwport Hospital, and forthwith employed on odd jobs. Private Copper crawled up the side of

a bluish rock-strewn hill thinly fringed with brush a-top, and remembering how he had peered at Sussex conies through the edge of furze-clumps, cautiously parted the dry stems before his face. At the foot of the long slope sat three farmers smoking. To his natural lust for tobacco was added personal wrath because spiky plants were pricking his belly, and Private Copper slid the backsight up to fifteen hundred yards. . . .

'Good evening, khaki. Please don't move,' said a voice on his left, and as he jerked his head round he saw entirely down the barrel of a well-kept Lee-Metford protruding from an insignificant tuft of thorn. Very few graven images have moved less than did Private Copper through the next ten seconds.

'It's nearer seventeen hundred than fifteen,' said a young man in an obviously ready-made suit of grey tweed, possessing himself of Private Copper's rifle. 'Thank *you*. We've got a post of thirty-seven men out yonder. You've eleven—eh? We don't want to kill 'em. We have no quarrel with poor uneducated khakis, and we do not want prisoners we do not keep. It is demoralising to both sides—eh?'

Private Copper did not feel called upon to lay down the conduct of guerilla warfare. This dark-skinned, dark-haired, and dark-eyed stranger was

his first intimate enemy. He spoke, allowing for a clipped cadence that recalled to Copper vague memories of Umballa, in precisely the same offensive accent that the young squire of Wilmington had used fifteen years ago when he caught and kicked Alf Copper, a rabbit in each pocket, out of the ditches of Cuckmere. The enemy looked Copper up and down, folded and repocketed a copy of an English weekly which he had been reading, and said: 'You seem an inarticulate sort of swine—like the rest of them—eh?'

'You,' said Copper, thinking, somehow, of the crushing answers he had never given to the young squire, 'are a renegid. Why, you ain't Dutch. You're English, same as me.'

'*No*, khaki. If you cannot talk civilly to a gentleman I will blow your head off.'

Copper cringed, and the action overbalanced him so that he rolled some six or eight feet downhill, under the lee of a rough rock. His brain was working with a swiftness and clarity strange in all his experience of Alf Copper. While he rolled he spoke, and the voice from his own jaws amazed him: 'If you did, 'twouldn't make you any less of a renegid.' As a useful afterthought he added: 'I've sprained my ankle.'

The young man was at his side in a flash. Copper made no motion to rise, but, cross-legged

under the rock, grunted: ''Ow much did old Krujer pay you for this? What was you wanted for at 'ome? Where did you desert from?'

'Khaki,' said the young man, sitting down in his turn, 'you are a shade better than your mates. You did not make much more noise than a yoke of oxen when you tried to come up this hill, but you are an ignorant diseased beast like the rest of your people—eh? When you were at the Ragged Schools did they teach you any history, Tommy—'istory, I mean?'

'Don't need no schoolin' to know a renegid,' said Copper. He had made three yards down the hill—out of sight, unless they could see through rocks, of the enemy's smoking party.

The young man laughed; and tossed the soldier a black sweating stick of 'True Affection.' (Private Copper had not smoked a pipe for three weeks.)

'*You* don't get this—eh?' said the young man. '*We* do. We take it from the trains as we want it. You can keep the cake—you po-ah Tommee.' Copper rammed the good stuff into his long-cold pipe and puffed luxuriously. Two years ago the sister of gunner-guard De Souza, East India Railway, had, at a dance given by the sergeants to the Allahabad Railway Volunteers, informed Copper

that she could not think of waltzing with 'a poo-ah Tommee.' Private Copper wondered why that memory should have returned at this hour.

'I'm going to waste a little trouble on you before I send you back to your picket *quite* naked —eh? Then you can say how you were overpowered by twenty of us and fired off your last round—like the men we picked up at the drift playing cards at Stryden's farm—eh? What's your name—eh?'

Private Copper thought for a moment of a far-away housemaid who might still, if the local postman had not gone too far, be interested in his fate. On the other hand, he was, by temperament, economical of the truth. 'Pennycuik,' he said, 'John Pennycuik.'

'Thank you. Well, Mr. John Pennycuik, I'm going to teach you a little 'istory, as you'd call it—eh?'

'Ow!' said Copper, stuffing his left hand in his mouth. 'So long since I've smoked I've burned my 'and—an' the pipe's dropped too. No objection to my movin' down to fetch it, is there—Sir?'

'I've got you covered,' said the young man, graciously, and Private Copper, hopping on one leg, because of his sprain, recovered the pipe yet another three yards downhill and squatted under another rock slightly larger than the first. A

roundish boulder made a pleasant rest for his captor, who sat cross-legged once more, facing Copper, his rifle across his knee, his hand on the trigger-guard.

'Well, Mr. Pennycuik, as I was going to tell you. A little after you were born in your English workhouse, your kind, honourable, brave country, England, sent an English gentleman, who could not tell a lie, to say that so long as the sun rose and the rivers ran in their courses the Transvaal would belong to England. Did you ever hear that, khaki—eh?'

'Oh no, Sir,' said Copper. This sentence about the sun and the rivers happened to be a very aged jest of McBride, the professional humorist of D Company, when they discussed the probable length of the war. Copper had thrown beef-tins at McBride in the grey dawn of many wet and dry camps for intoning it.

'*Of* course you would not. Now, mann, I tell you, listen.' He spat aside and cleared his throat. 'Because of that little promise, my father he moved into the Transvaal and bought a farm—a little place of twenty or thirty thousand acres, don't—you—know.'

The tone, in spite of the sing-song cadence fighting with the laboured parody of the English drawl, was unbearably like the young Wilmington

squire's, and Copper found himself saying: 'I ought to. I've 'elped burn some.'

'Yes, you'll pay for that later. *And* he opened a store.'

'Ho! Shopkeeper was he?'

'The kind you call "Sir" and sweep the floor for, Pennycuik. . . . You see, in those days one used to believe in the British Government. My father did. *Then* the Transvaal wiped thee earth with the English. They beat them six times running. You know *thatt*—eh?'

'Isn't what we've come 'ere for.'

'*But* my father (he knows better now) kept on believing in the English. I suppose it was the pretty talk about rivers and suns that cheated him—eh? Anyhow, he believed in his own country. Inn his own country. *So*—you see—he was a little startled when he found himself handed over to the Transvaal as a prisoner of war. That's what it came to, Tommy—a prisoner of war. You know what that is—eh? England was too honourable and too gentlemanly to take trouble. There were no terms made for my father.'

'So 'e made 'em 'imself. Useful old bird.' Private Copper sliced up another pipeful and looked out across the wrinkled sea of kopjes, through which came the roar of the rushing Orange River, so unlike quiet Cuckmere.

The young man's face darkened. 'I think I shall sjambok you myself when I've quite done with you. *No*, my father (he was a fool) made no terms for eight years—ninety-six months—and for every day of them the Transvaal made his life hell for my father and—his people.'

'I'm glad to hear that,' said the impenitent Copper.

'Are you? You can think of it when I'm taking the skin off your back—eh? . . . My father, he lost everything—everything down to his self-respect. You don't know what *thatt* means—eh?'

'Why?' said Copper. 'I'm smokin' baccy stole by a renegid. Why wouldn't I know?'

If it came to a flogging on that hillside there might be a chance of reprisals. Of course, he might be marched to the Boer camp in the next valley and there operated upon; but Army life teaches no man to cross bridges unnecessarily.

'Yes, after eight years, my father, cheated by your bitch of a country, he found out who was the upper dog in South Africa.'

'That's me,' said Copper valiantly. 'If it takes another 'alf-century, it's me an' the likes of me.'

'You? Heaven help you! You'll be screaming at a wagon-wheel in an hour. . . . Then it

struck my father that he'd like to shoot the people who'd betrayed him. You—you—*you*! He told his son all about it. He told him never to trust the English. He told him to do them all the harm he could. Mann, I tell you, I don't want much telling. I was born in the Transvaal—I'm a burgher. If my father didn't love the English, by the Lord, mann, I tell you, I hate them from the bottom of my soul.'

The voice quavered and ran high. Once more, for no conceivable reason, Private Copper found his inward eye turned upon Umballa cantonments of a dry dusty afternoon, when the saddle-coloured son of a local hotel-keeper came to the barracks to complain of a theft of fowls. He saw the dark face, the plover's-egg-tinted eyeballs, and the thin excited hands. Above all, he remembered the passionate, queerly-strung words. Slowly he returned to South Africa, using the very sentence his sergeant had used to the poultry man.

'Go on with your complaint. I'm listenin'.'

'Complaint! Complaint about *you*, you ox! We strip and kick your sort by thousands.'

The young man rocked to and fro above the rifle, whose muzzle thus deflected itself from the pit of Private Copper's stomach. His face was dusky with rage.

'Yess, I'm a Transvaal burgher. It took us

about twenty years to find out how rotten you were. *We* know and you know it now. Your Army—it is the laughing-stock of the Continent.' He tapped the newspaper in his pocket. 'You think you're going to win, you poor fools! Your people—your own people—your silly rotten fools of people will crawl out of it as they did after Majuba. They are beginning now. Look what your own working classes, the diseased, lying, drinking white stuff that you come out of, are saying.' He thrust the English weekly, doubled at the leading article, on Copper's knee. 'See what dirty dogs your masters are. They do not even back you in your dirty work. *We* cleared the country down to Ladysmith—to Estcourt. *We* cleared the country down to Colesberg.'

'Yes. We 'ad to clean up be'ind you. Messy, I call it.'

'You've had to stop farm-burning because your people daren't do it. They were afraid. You daren't kill a spy. You daren't shoot a spy when you catch him in your own uniform. You daren't touch our loyall people in Cape Town! Your masters won't let you. You will feed our women and children till we are quite ready to take them back. *You* can't put your cowardly noses out of the towns you say you've occupied. *You* daren't move a convoy twenty miles. You think you've

done something? You've done nothing, and you've taken a quarter of a million of men to do it! There isn't a nigger in South Africa that doesn't obey us if we lift our finger. You pay the stuff four pounds a month and they lie to you. *We* flog 'em, as I shall flog you.'

He clasped his hands together and leaned forward his out-thrust chin within two feet of Copper's left, or pipe hand.

'Yuss,' said Copper, 'it's a fair knock-out.' The fist landed to a hair on the chin-point, the neck snicked like a gun-lock, and the back of the head crashed on the boulder behind.

Copper grabbed up both rifles, unshipped the cross-bandoliers, drew forth the English weekly, and picking up the lax hands, looked long and intently at the finger-nails.

'No! Not a sign of it there,' he said. ''Is nails are as clean as mine—but he talks just like 'em though. And he's a landlord too! A landed proprietor! Shockin', I call it.'

The arms began to flap with returning consciousness. Private Copper rose up and whispered: 'If you open your head, I'll bash it.' There was no suggestion of sprain in the flung-back left boot. 'Now walk in front of me, both arms perpendicularly elevated. I'm only a third-class shot, so, if you don't object, I'll rest the muzzle

of my rifle lightly but firmly on your collar-button—coverin' the serviceable vertebree. If your friends see us thus engaged, you pray—'ard.'

Private and prisoner staggered downhill. No shots broke the peace of the afternoon, but once the young man checked and was sick.

'There's a lot of things I could say to you,' Copper observed, at the close of the paroxysm, 'but it doesn't matter. Look 'ere, you call me "pore Tommy" again.'

The prisoner hesitated.

'Oh, I ain't goin' to do anythin' *to* you. I'm reconnoiterin' in my own. Say "pore Tommy" 'alf-a-dozen times.'

The prisoner obeyed.

'*That's* what's been puzzlin' me since I 'ad the pleasure o' meetin' you,' said Copper. 'You ain't 'alf-caste, but you talk *chee-chee—pukka* bazar chee-chee. *Pro*ceed.'

'Hullo,' said the Sergeant of the picket, twenty minutes later, 'where did you round him up?'

'On the top o' yonder craggy mounting. There's a mob of 'em sitting round their Bibles seventeen 'undred yards (you said it was seventeen 'undred?) t'other side—an' I want some coffee.' He sat down on the smoke-blackened stones by the fire.

''Ow did you get 'im?' said McBride, professional humorist, quietly filching the English weekly from under Copper's armpit.

'On the chin—while 'e was waggin' it at me.'

'What is 'e? 'Nother Colonial rebel to be 'orribly disenfranchised, or a Cape Minister, or only a loyal farmer with dynamite in both boots. Tell us all about it, Burjer!'

'You leave my prisoner alone,' said Private Copper. ''E's 'ad losses an' trouble; an' it's in the family too. 'E thought I never read the papers, so 'e kindly lent me his very own *Jerrold's Weekly*—an' 'e explained it to me as patronisin' as a—as a militia subaltern doin' Railway Staff Officer. 'E's a left-over from Majuba—one of the worst kind, an' 'earin' the evidence as I did, I don't exactly blame 'im. It was this way.'

To the picket Private Copper held forth for ten minutes on the life-history of his captive. Allowing for some purple patches, it was an absolutely fair rendering.

'But what I dis-liked was this baccy-priggin' beggar, 'oo's people, on 'is own showin', couldn't 'ave been more than thirty or forty years in the coun—on this Gawd-forsaken dust-'eap, comin' the squire over me. They're all parsons—we know *that*, but parson *an'* squire is a bit too thick for Alf Copper. Why, I caught 'im in the

shameful act of tryin' to start a aristocracy on a gun an' a wagon an' a *shambuk*! Yes; that's what it was: a bloomin' aristocracy.'

'No, it weren't,' said McBride, at length, on the dirt, above the purloined weekly. 'You're the aristocrat, Alf. Old *Jerrold's* givin' it you 'ot. You're the uneducated 'ireling of a callous aristocracy which 'as sold itself to the 'Ebrew financeer. Meantime, Ducky'—he ran his finger down a column of assorted paragraphs—'you're slakin' your brutal instincks in furious excesses. Shriekin' women an' desolated 'omesteads is what you enjoy, Alf. . . . Halloa! What's a smokin' 'ektacomb?'

''Ere! Let's look. 'Aven't seen a proper spicy paper for a year. Good old *Jerrold's*!' Pinewood and Moppet, reservists, flung themselves on McBride's shoulders, pinning him to the ground.

'Lie over your own bloomin' side of the bed, an' we can all look,' he protested.

'They're only po-ah Tommies,' said Copper, apologetically, to the prisoner. 'Po-ah unedicated khakis. *They* don't know what they're fightin' for. They're lookin' for what the diseased, lying, drinkin' white stuff that they come from is sayin' about 'em!'

The prisoner set down his tin of coffee and stared helplessly round the circle.

'I—I don't understand them.'

The Canadian sergeant, picking his teeth with a thorn, nodded sympathetically:

'If it comes to that, *we* don't in my country! . . . Say, boys, when you're through with your English mail you might 's well provide an escort for your prisoner. He's waitin'.'

'Arf a mo', Sergeant,' said McBride, still reading. ''Ere's Old Barbarity on the ramp again with some of 'is lady friends, 'oo don't like concentration camps. Wish they'd visit ours. Pinewood's a married man. He'd know how to be'ave!'

'Well, I ain't goin' to amuse my prisoner alone. 'E's gettin' 'omesick,' cried Copper. 'One of you thieves read out what's vexin' Old Barbarity an' 'is 'arem these days. You'd better listen, Burjer, because, afterwards, I'm goin' to fall out an' perpetrate those nameless barbarities all over you to keep up the reputation of the British Army.'

From that English weekly, to bar out which a large and perspiring staff of Press censors toiled seven days of the week at Cape Town, did Pinewood of the Reserve read unctuously excerpts of the speeches of the accredited leaders of His Majesty's Opposition. The night-picket arrived in the middle of it, but stayed entranced without paying any compliments, till Pinewood had entirely

finished the leading article, and several occasional notes.

'Gentlemen of the jury,' said Alf Copper, hitching up what war had left to him of trousers —'you've 'eard what 'e's been fed up with. *Do* you blame the beggar? 'Cause I don't! . . . Leave 'im alone, McBride. He's my first and only cap-ture, an' I'm goin' to walk 'ome with 'im, ain't I, Ducky? . . . Fall in, Burjer. It's Bermuda, or Umballa, or Ceylon for you—and I'd give a month's pay to be in your little shoes.'

As not infrequently happens, the actual moving off the ground broke the prisoner's nerve. He stared at the tinted hills round him, gasped and began to struggle—kicking, swearing, weeping, and fluttering all together.

'Pore beggar—oh, pore, *pore* beggar!' said Alf, leaning in on one side of him, while Pinewood blocked him on the other.

'Let me go! Let me go! Mann, I tell you, let me go——'

''E screams like a woman!' said McBride. 'They'll 'ear 'im five miles off.'

'There's one or two ought to 'ear 'im—in England,' said Copper, putting aside a wildly waving arm.

'Married, ain't 'e?' said Pinewood. 'I've seen

'em go like this before—just at the last. *'Old* on, old man. No one's goin to 'urt you.'

The last of the sun threw the enormous shadow of a kopje over the little, anxious, wriggling group.

'Quit that,' said the Sergeant of a sudden. 'You're only making him worse. Hands *up*, prisoner! Now you get a holt of yourself, or this'll go off.'

And indeed the revolver-barrel square at the man's panting chest seemed to act like a tonic; he choked, recovered himself, and fell in between Copper and Pinewood.

As the picket neared the camp it broke into song that was heard among the officers' tents:—

'E sent us 'is blessin' from London town
(The beggar that kep' the cordite down),
But what do we care if 'e smile or frown,
The beggar that kep' the cordite down?
The mildly nefarious
Wildly barbarious
Beggar that kept the cordite down!

Said a captain a mile away: 'Why are they singing *that*? We haven't had a mail for a month, have we?'

An hour later the same captain said to his servant: 'Jenkins, I understand the picket have got a—got a newspaper off a prisoner to-day. I

wish you could lay hands on it, Jenkins. Copy of the *Times*, I think.'

'Yes, Sir. Copy of the *Times*, Sir,' said Jenkins, without a quiver, and went forth to make his own arrangements.

'Copy of the *Times*,' said the blameless Alf, from beneath his blanket. 'I ain't a member of the Soldiers' Institoot. Go an' look in the reg'mental Readin'-room—Veldt Row, Kopje Street, second turnin' to the left between 'ere an' Naauwport.'

Jenkins summarised briefly in a tense whisper the thing that Alf Copper need not be.

'But my particular copy of the *Times* is specially pro'ibited by the censor from corruptin' the morals of the Army. Get a written order from K. o' K., properly countersigned, an' I'll think about it.'

'I've got all *you* want,' said Jenkins. ''Urry up. I want to 'ave a squint myself.'

Something gurgled in the darkness, and Private Copper fell back smacking his lips.

'Gawd bless my prisoner, and make me a good boy. Amen. 'Ere you are, Jenkins. It's dirt cheap at a tot.'

STEAM TACTICS

THE NECESSITARIAN

I know not in whose hands are laid
  To empty upon earth
From unsuspected ambuscade
  The very Urns of Mirth:

Who bids the Heavenly Lark arise
  And cheer our solemn round—
The Jest beheld with streaming eyes
  And grovellings on the ground;

Who joins the flats of Time and Chance
  Behind the prey preferred,
And thrones on Shrieking Circumstance
  The Sacredly Absurd,

Till Laughter, voiceless through excess,
  Waves mute appeal and sore,
Above the midriff's deep distress,
  For breath to laugh once more.

No creed hath dared to hail him Lord,
  No raptured choirs proclaim,
And Nature's strenuous Overword
  Hath nowhere breathed his name.

Yet, may it be, on wayside jape,
  The selfsame Power bestows
The selfsame power as went to shape
  His Planet or His Rose.

STEAM TACTICS

I CAUGHT sight of their faces as we came up behind the cart in the narrow Sussex lane; but though it was not eleven o'clock, they were both asleep.

That the carrier was on the wrong side of the road made no difference to his language when I rang my bell. He said aloud of motor-cars, and specially of steam ones, all the things which I had read in the faces of superior coachmen. Then he pulled slantwise across me.

There was a vociferous steam air-pump attached to that car which could be applied at pleasure. . . .

The cart was removed about a bowshot's length in seven and a quarter seconds, to the accompaniment of parcels clattering. At the foot of the next hill the horse stopped, and the two men came out over the tail-board.

My engineer backed and swung the car, ready to move out of reach.

'The blighted egg-boiler has steam up,' said Mr. Hinchcliffe, pausing to gather a large stone. 'Temporise with the beggar, Pye, till the sights come on!'

'I can't leave my 'orse!' roared the carrier; 'but bring 'em up 'ere, an' I'll kill 'em all over again.'

'Good morning, Mr. Pyecroft,' I called cheerfully. 'Can I give you a lift anywhere?'

The attack broke up round my fore-wheels.

'Well, we *do* 'ave the knack o' meeting *in puris naturalibus*, as I've so often said.' Mr. Pyecroft wrung my hand. 'Yes, I'm on leaf. So's Hinch. We're visiting friends among these kopjes.'

A monotonous bellowing up the road persisted, where the carrier was still calling for corpses.

'That's Agg. He's Hinch's cousin. You aren't fortunit in your family connections, Hinch. 'E's usin' language in derogation of good manners. Go and abolish 'im.'

Henry Salt Hinchcliffe stalked back to the cart and spoke to his cousin. I recall much that the wind bore to me of his words and the carrier's. It seemed as if the friendship of years were dissolving amid throes.

''Ave it your own silly way, then,' roared the carrier, 'an' get into Linghurst on your own silly

feet. I've done with you two runagates.' He lashed his horse and passed out of sight still rumbling.

'The fleet's sailed,' said Pyecroft, 'leavin' us on the beach as before. Had you any particular port in your mind?'

'Well, I was going to meet a friend at Instead Wick, but I don't mind——'

'Oh! that'll do as well as anything! We're on leaf, you see.'

'She'll hardly hold four,' said my engineer. I had broken him of the foolish habit of being surprised at things, but he was visibly uneasy.

Hinchcliffe returned, drawn as by ropes to my steam-car, round which he walked in narrowing circles.

'What's her speed?' he demanded of the engineer.

'Twenty-five,' said that loyal man.

'Easy to run?'

'No; very difficult,' was the emphatic answer.

'That just shows that you ain't fit for your rating. D'you suppose that a man who earns his livin' by runnin' 30-knot destroyers for a parstime —for a parstime, mark you!—is going to lie down before any blighted land-crabbing steam-pinnace on springs?'

Yet that was what he did. Directly under the

car he lay and looked upward into pipes—petrol, steam, and water—with a keen and searching eye.

I telegraphed Mr. Pyecroft a question.

'Not—in—the—least,' was the answer. 'Steam gadgets always take him that way. We had a bit of a riot at Parsley Green through his tryin' to show a traction-engine haulin' gipsy-wagons how to turn corners.'

'Tell him everything he wants to know,' I said to the engineer, as I dragged out a rug and spread it on the roadside.

'*He* don't want much showing,' said the engineer. Now, the two men had not, counting the time we took to stuff our pipes, been together more than three minutes.

'This,' said Pyecroft, driving an elbow back into the deep verdure of the hedge-foot, 'is a little bit of all right. Hinch, I shouldn't let too much o' that hot muckings drop in my eyes. Your leaf's up in a fortnight, an' you'll be wantin' 'em.'

'Here!' said Hinchcliffe, still on his back, to the engineer. 'Come here and show me the lead of this pipe.' And the engineer lay down beside him.

'That's all right,' said Mr. Hinchcliffe, rising. 'But she's more of a bag of tricks than I thought. Unship this superstructure aft'—he pointed to the

back seat—'and I'll have a look at the forced draught.'

The engineer obeyed with alacrity. I heard him volunteer the fact that he had a brother an artificer in the Navy.

'They couple very well, those two,' said Pyecroft critically, while Hinchcliffe sniffed round the asbestos-lagged boiler and turned on gay jets of steam.

'Now take me up the road,' he said. My man, for form's sake, looked at me.

'Yes, take him,' I said. 'He's all right.'

'No, I'm not,' said Hinchcliffe of a sudden—'not if I'm expected to judge my water out of a little shaving-glass.'

The water-gauge of that steam-car was reflected on a mirror to the right of the dashboard. I also had found it inconvenient.

'Throw up your arm and look at the gauge under your armpit. Only mind how you steer while you're doing it, or you'll get ditched!' I cried, as the car ran down the road.

'I wonder!' said Pyecroft, musing. 'But, after all, it's your steamin' gadgets he's usin' for his libretto, as you might put it. He said to me after breakfast only this mornin' 'ow he thanked his Maker, on all fours, that he wouldn't see nor smell nor thumb a runnin' bulgine till the

nineteenth prox. Now look at him! Only look at 'im!'

We could see, down the long slope of the road, my driver surrendering his seat to Hinchcliffe, while the car flickered generously from hedge to hedge.

'What happens if he upsets?'

'The petrol will light up and the boiler may blow up.'

'How rambunkshus! And'—Pyecroft blew a slow cloud—'Agg's about three hoops up this mornin', too.'

'What's that to do with us? He's gone down the road,' I retorted.

'Ye—es, but we'll overtake him. He's a vindictive carrier. He and Hinch 'ad words about pig-breeding this morning. O' course, Hinch don't know the elements o' that evolution; but he fell back on 'is naval rank an' office, an' Agg grew peevish. I wasn't sorry to get out of the cart. . . . Have you ever considered how, when you an' I meet, so to say, there's nearly always a remarkably hectic day ahead of us! Hullo! Behold the beef-boat returnin'!'

He rose as the car climbed up the slope, and shouted: 'In bow! Way 'nuff!'

'You be quiet!' cried Hinchcliffe, and drew up opposite the rug, his dark face shining with joy. 'She's the Poetry o' Motion! She's the Angel's

Dream. She's——' He shut off steam, and the slope being against her, the car slid soberly downhill again.

'What's this? I've got the brake on!' he yelled.

'It doesn't hold backwards,' I said. 'Put her on the mid-link.'

'That's a nasty one for the chief engineer o' the *Djinn*, 31-knot T.B.D.,' said Pyecroft. '*Do* you know what the mid-link is, Hinch?'

Once more the car returned to us; but as Pyecroft stooped to gather up the rug, Hinchcliffe jerked the lever testily, and with prawn-like speed she retired backwards into her own steam.

'Apparently 'e don't,' said Pyecroft. 'What's he done now, Sir?'

'Reversed her. I've done it myself.'

'But he's an engineer.'

For the third time the car manœuvred up the hill.

'I'll teach you to come alongside properly, if I keep you tiffies out all night!' shouted Pyecroft. It was evidently a quotation. Hinchcliffe's face grew livid, and, his hand ever so slightly working on the throttle, the car buzzed twenty yards uphill.

'That's enough. We'll take your word for it. The mountain will go to Ma'ommed. Stand *fast*!'

Pyecroft and I and the rug marched up where she and Hinchcliffe fumed together.

'Not as easy as it looks—eh, Hinch?'

'It is dead easy. I'm going to drive her to Instead Wick—aren't I?' said the first-class engine-room artificer. I thought of his performances with No. 267 and nodded. After all, it was a small privilege to accord to pure genius.

'But my engineer will stand by—at first,' I added.

'An' you a family man, too,' muttered Pyecroft, swinging himself into the right rear seat. 'Sure to be a remarkably hectic day when we meet.'

We adjusted ourselves and, in the language of the immortal Navy doctor, paved our way towards Linghurst, distant by mile-post 11¾ miles.

Mr. Hinchcliffe, every nerve and muscle braced, talked only to the engineer, and that professionally. I recalled the time when I, too, had enjoyed the rack on which he voluntarily extended himself.

And the County of Sussex slid by in slow time.

'How cautious is the tiffy-bird!' said Pyecroft.

'Even in a destroyer,' Hinch snapped over his shoulder, 'you ain't expected to con and drive simultaneous. Don't address any remarks to *me*!'

'Pump!' said the engineer. 'Your water's droppin'.'

'*I* know that. Where the Heavens is that blighted by-pass?'

He beat his right or throttle hand madly on the side of the car till he found the bent rod that more or less controls the pump, and, neglecting all else, twisted it furiously.

My engineer grabbed the steering-bar just in time to save us lurching into a ditch.

'If I was a burnin' peacock, with two hundred bloodshot eyes in my shinin' tail, I'd need 'em all on this job!' said Hinch.

'Don't talk! Steer! This ain't the North Atlantic,' Pyecroft replied.

'Blast my stokers! Why, the steam's dropped fifty pounds!' Hinchcliffe cried.

'Fire's blown out,' said the engineer. 'Stop her!'

'Does she do that often?' said Hinch, descending.

'Sometimes.'

'Any time?'

'Any time a cross-wind catches her.'

The engineer produced a match and stooped.

That car (now, thank Heaven, no more than an evil memory) never lit twice in the same fashion. This time she back-fired superbly, and Pyecroft went out over the right rear wheel in a column of rich yellow flame.

'I've seen a mine explode at Bantry—once—prematoor,' he volunteered.

'That's all right,' said Hinchcliffe, brushing down his singed beard with a singed forefinger. (He had been watching too closely.) 'Has she any more little surprises up her dainty sleeve?'

'She hasn't begun yet,' said my engineer, with a scornful cough. 'Some one 'as opened the petrol-supply-valve too wide.'

'Change places with me, Pyecroft,' I commanded, for I remembered that the petrol-supply, the steam-lock, and the forced draught were all controlled from the right rear seat.

'Me? Why? There's a whole switchboard full o' nickel-plated muckin's which I haven't begun to play with yet. The starboard side's crawlin' with 'em.'

'Change, or I'll kill you!' said Hinchcliffe, and he looked like it.

'That's the tiffy all over. When anything goes wrong, blame it on the lower deck. Navigate by your automatic self, then! *I* won't help you any more.'

We navigated for a mile in dead silence.

'Talkin' o' wakes——' said Pyecroft suddenly.

'We weren't,' Hinchcliffe grunted.

'There's some wakes would break a snake's

back; but this of yours, so to speak, would fair turn a tapeworm giddy. That's all I wish to observe, Hinch. . . . Cart at anchor on the port bow. It's Agg!'

Far up the shaded road into secluded Bromlingleigh we saw the carrier's cart at rest before the post-office.

'He's bung in the fairway. How'm I to get past?' said Hinchcliffe. 'There's no room. Here, Pye, come and relieve the wheel!'

'Nay, nay, Pauline. You've made your own bed. You've as good as left your happy home an' family cart to steal it. Now you lie on it.'

'Ring your bell,' I suggested.

'Glory!' said Pyecroft, falling forward into the nape of Hinchcliffe's neck as the car stopped dead.

'Get out o' my back-hair! That must have been the brake I touched off,' Hinchcliffe muttered, and repaired his error tumultuously.

We passed the cart as though we had been all Bruges belfry. Agg, from the post-office door, regarded us with a too pacific eye. I remembered later that the pretty postmistress looked on us pityingly.

Hinchcliffe wiped the sweat from his brow and drew breath. It was the first vehicle that he had passed, and I sympathised with him.

'You needn't grip so hard,' said my engineer. 'She steers as easy as a bicycle.'

'Ho! You suppose I ride bicycles up an' down my engine-room?' was the answer. 'I've other things to think about. She's a terror. She's a whistlin' lunatic. I'd sooner run the old South-Easter at Simonstown than her!'

'One of the nice things they say about her,' I interrupted, 'is that no engineer is needed to run this machine.'

'No. They'd need about seven.'

'"Common-sense only is needed,"' I quoted.

'Make a note of that, Hinch. Just common-sense,' Pyecroft put in.

'And now,' I said, 'we'll have to take in water. There isn't more than a couple of inches of water in the tank.'

'Where d'you get it from?'

'Oh!—cottages and such-like.'

'Yes, but that being so, where does your much-advertised twenty-five miles an hour come in? Ain't a dung-cart more to the point?'

'If you want to go anywhere, I suppose it would be,' I replied.

'*I* don't want to go anywhere. I'm thinkin' of you who've got to live with her. She'll burn her tubes if she loses her water?'

'She will.'

'I've never scorched yet, and I'm not beginnin' now.' He shut off steam firmly. 'Out you get, Pye, an' shove her along by hand.'

'Where to?'

'The nearest water-tank,' was the reply. 'And Sussex is a dry county.'

'She ought to have drag-ropes — little pipe-clayed ones,' said Pyecroft.

We got out and pushed under the hot sun for half-a-mile till we came to a cottage, sparsely inhabited by one child who wept.

'All out haymakin', o' course,' said Pyecroft, thrusting his head into the parlour for an instant. 'What's the evolution now?'

'Skirmish till we find a well,' I said.

'Hmm! But they wouldn't 'ave left that kid without a chaperon, so to say . . . I thought so! Where's a stick?'

A bluish and silent beast of the true old sheep-dog breed glided from behind an outhouse and without words fell to work.

Pyecroft kept him at bay with a rake-handle while our party, in rallying-square, retired along the box-bordered brick path to the car.

At the garden gate the dumb devil halted, looked back on the child, and sat down to scratch.

'That's his three-mile limit, thank Heaven!' said Pyecroft. 'Fall in, push-party, and proceed

with land-transport o' pinnace. I'll protect your flanks in case this sniffin' flea-bag is tempted beyond 'is strength.'

We pushed off in silence. The car weighed 1200 lb., and even on ball-bearings was a powerful sudorific. From somewhere behind a hedge we heard a gross rustic laugh.

'Those are the beggars we lie awake for, patrollin' the high seas. There ain't a port in China where we wouldn't be better treated. Yes, a Boxer 'ud be ashamed of it,' said Pyecroft.

A cloud of fine dust boomed down the road.

'Some happy craft with a well-found engine-room! How different!' panted Hinchcliffe, bent over the starboard mudguard.

It was a claret-coloured petrol car, and it stopped courteously, as good cars will at sight of trouble.

'Water, only water,' I answered in reply to offers of help.

'There's a lodge at the end of these oak palings. They'll give you all you want. Say I sent you. Gregory—Michael Gregory. Good-bye!'

'Ought to 'ave been in the Service. Prob'ly is,' was Pyecroft's comment.

At that thrice-blessed lodge our water-tank was filled (I dare not quote Mr. Hinchcliffe's remarks when he saw the collapsible rubber bucket with

which we did it) and we re-embarked. It seemed that Sir Michael Gregory owned many acres, and that his park ran for miles.

'No objection to your going through it,' said the lodge-keeper. 'It'll save you a goodish bit to Instead Wick.'

But we needed petrol, which could be purchased at Pigginfold, a few miles farther up, and so we held to the main road, as our fate had decreed.

'We've come seven miles in fifty-four minutes, so far,' said Hinchcliffe (he was driving with greater freedom and less responsibility), 'and now we have to fill our bunkers. This is worse than the Channel Fleet.'

At Pigginfold, after ten minutes, we refilled our petrol tank and lavishly oiled our engines. Mr. Hinchcliffe wished to discharge our engineer on the grounds that he (Mr. Hinchcliffe) was now entirely abreast of his work. To this I demurred, for I knew my car. She had, in the language of the road, held up for a day and a half, and by most bitter experience I suspected that her time was very near. Therefore, three miles short of Linghurst, I was less surprised than any one, excepting always my engineer, when the engines set up a lunatic clucking, and, after two or three kicks, jammed.

'Heaven forgive me all the harsh things I may

have said about destroyers in my sinful time!' wailed Hinchcliffe, snapping back the throttle. 'What's worryin' Ada now?'

'The forward eccentric-strap screw's dropped off,' said the engineer, investigating.

'That all? I thought it was a propeller-blade.'

'We must go an' look for it. There isn't another.'

'Not me,' said Pyecroft from his seat. 'Out pinnace, Hinch, an' creep for it. It won't be more than five miles back.'

The two men, with bowed heads, moved up the road.

'Look like etymologists, don't they? Does she decant her innards often, so to speak?' Pyecroft asked.

I told him the true tale of a race-full of ball-bearings strewn four miles along a Hampshire road, and by me recovered in detail. He was profoundly touched.

'Poor Hinch! Poor—poor Hinch!' he said. 'And that's only one of her little games, is it? He'll be homesick for the Navy by night.'

When the search-party doubled back with the missing screw, it was Hinchcliffe who replaced it in less than five minutes, while my engineer looked on admiringly.

'Your boiler's only seated on four little paper-

clips,' he said, crawling from beneath her. 'She's a wicker-willow lunch-basket below. She's a runnin' miracle. Have you had this combustible spirit-lamp long?'

I told him.

'And yet you were afraid to come into the *Nightmare's* engine-room when we were runnin' trials!'

'It's all a matter of taste,' Pyecroft volunteered. 'But I will say for you, Hinch, you've certainly got the hang of her steamin' gadgets in quick time.'

He was driving her very sweetly, but with a worried look in his eye and a tremor in his arm.

'She don't seem to answer her helm somehow,' he said.

'There's a lot of play to the steering-gear,' said my engineer. 'We generally tighten it up every few miles.'

''Like me to stop now? We've run as much as one mile and a half without incident,' he replied tartly.

'Then you're lucky,' said my engineer, bristling in turn.

'They'll wreck the whole turret out o' nasty professional spite in a minute,' said Pyecroft. 'That's the worst o' machinery. Man dead ahead, Hinch—semaphorin' like the flagship in a fit!'

'Amen!' said Hinchcliffe. 'Shall I stop, or shall I cut him down?'

He stopped, for full in the centre of the Linghurst Road stood a person in pepper-and-salt raiment (ready-made), with a brown telegraph envelope in his hands.

'Twenty-three and a half miles an hour,' he began, weighing a small beam-engine of a Waterbury in one red paw. 'From the top of the hill over our measured quarter-mile—twenty-three and a half.'

'You manurial gardener——' Hinchcliffe began. I prodded him warningly from behind, and laid the other hand on Pyecroft's stiffening knee.

'Also—on information received—drunk and disorderly in charge of a motor-car—to the common danger—two men like sailors in appearance,' the man went on.

'Like sailors! . . . That's Agg's little *roose*. No wonder he smiled at us,' said Pyecroft.

'I've been waiting for you some time,' the man concluded, folding up the telegram.

'Who's the owner?'

I indicated myself.

'Then I want you as well as the two seafaring men. Drunk and disorderly can be treated summary. You come on.'

My relations with the Sussex constabulary have,

so far, been of the best, but I could not love this person.

'Of course you have your authority to show?' I hinted.

'I'll show it you at Linghurst,' he retorted hotly—'all the authority you want.'

'I only want the badge, or warrant, or whatever it is a plain-clothes man has to show.'

He made as though to produce it, but checked himself, repeating less politely the invitation to Linghurst. The action and the tone confirmed my many-times-tested theory that the bulk of English shoregoing institutions are based on conformable strata of absolutely impervious inaccuracy. I reflected and became aware of a drumming on the back of the front seat that Pyecroft, bowed forward and relaxed, was tapping with his knuckles. The hardly checked fury on Hinchcliffe's brow had given place to a greasy imbecility, and he nodded over the steering-bar. In longs and shorts, as laid down by the pious and immortal Mr. Morse, Pyecroft tapped out, 'Sham drunk. Get him in the car.'

'I can't stay here all day,' said the constable.

Pyecroft raised his head. Then was seen with what majesty the British sailor-man envisages a new situation.

'Met gennelman heavy sheeway,' said he.

'Do' tell me British gelman can't give 'ole Brish Navy lif' own blighted ste' cart. Have another drink!'

'I didn't know they were as drunk as all that when they stopped me,' I explained.

'You can say all that at Linghurst,' was the answer. 'Come on.'

'Quite right,' I said. 'But the question is, if you take these two out on the road, they'll fall down or start killing you.'

'Then I'd call on you to assist me in the execution o' my duty.'

'But I'd see you further first. You'd better come with us in the car. I'll turn this passenger out.' (This was my engineer, sitting quite silent.) 'You don't want him, and, anyhow, he'd only be a witness for the defence.'

'That's true,' said the constable. 'But it wouldn't make any odds—at Linghurst.'

My engineer skipped into the bracken like a rabbit. I bade him cut across Sir Michael Gregory's park, and if he caught my friend, to tell him I should probably be rather late for lunch.

'I ain't going to be driven by *him*.' Our destined prey pointed at Hinchcliffe with apprehension.

'Of course not. You take my seat and keep the big sailor in order. He's too drunk to do much.

I'll change places with the other one. Only be quick; I want to pay my fine and get it over.'

'That's the way to look at it,' he said, dropping into the left rear seat. 'We're making quite a lot out o' you motor gentry.' He folded his arms judicially as the car gathered way under Hinchcliffe's stealthy hand.

'But *you* aren't driving?' he cried, half rising.

'You've noticed it?' said Pyecroft, and embraced him with one anaconda-like left arm.

'Don't kill him,' said Hinchcliffe briefly. 'I want to show him what twenty-three and a quarter is.' We were going a fair twelve, which was about the car's limit.

Our passenger swore something and then groaned.

'Hush, darling!' said Pyecroft, 'or I'll have to hug you.'

The main road, white under the noon sun, lay broad before us, running north to Linghurst. We slowed and looked anxiously for a side track.

'And now,' said I, 'I want to see your authority.'

'The badge of your ratin',' Pyecroft added.

'I'm a constable,' he said, and kicked. Indeed, his boots would have bewrayed him across half a county's plough; but boots are not legal evidence.

'I want your authority,' I repeated coldly;

'some evidence that you are not a common, drunken tramp.'

It was as I had expected. He had forgotten or mislaid his badge. He had neglected to learn the outlines of the work for which he received money and consideration; and he expected me, the taxpayer, to go to infinite trouble to supplement his deficiencies.

'If you don't believe me, come to Linghurst,' was the burden of his almost national anthem.

'But I can't run all over Sussex every time a blackmailer jumps up and says he is a policeman.'

'Why, it's quite close,' he persisted.

''Twon't be—soon,' said Hinchcliffe.

'None of the other people ever made any trouble. To be sure *they* was gentlemen,' he cried. 'All I can say is, it may be very funny, but it ain't fair.'

I laboured with him in this dense fog, but to no end. He had forgotten his badge, and we were villains for that we did not cart him to the pub or barracks where he had left it.

Pyecroft listened critically as we spun along the hard road.

'If he was a concentrated Boer, he couldn't expect much more,' he observed. 'Now, suppose I'd been a lady in a delicate state o' health—you'd ha' made me very ill with your doings.'

'I wish I 'ad. 'Ere! 'Elp! 'Elp! Hi!'

The man had seen a constable in uniform fifty yards ahead, where a lane ran into the road, and would have said more but that Hinchcliffe jerked her up that lane with a wrench that nearly capsized us as the constable came running heavily.

It seemed to me that both our guest and his fellow-villain in uniform smiled as we fled down the road easterly betwixt the narrowing hedges.

'You'll know all about it in a little time,' said our guest. 'You've only yourselves to thank for runnin' your 'ead into a trap.' And he whistled ostentatiously.

We made no answer.

'If that man 'ad chose, 'e could have identified me,' he said.

Still we were silent.

'But 'e'll do it later, when you're caught.'

'Not if you go on talking. 'E won't be able to,' said Pyecroft. 'I don't know what traverse you think you're workin', but your duty till you're put in cells for a highway robber is to love, honour, an' cherish *me* most special—performin' all evolutions signalled in rapid time. I tell you this, in case o' anything turnin' up.'

'Don't you fret about things turnin' up,' was the reply.

Hinchcliffe had given the car a generous throttle, and she was well set to work, when, without warning, the road—there are two or three in Sussex like it—turned down and ceased.

'Holy Muckins!' he cried, and stood on both brakes as our helpless tyres slithered over wet grass and bracken—down and down into forest—early British woodland. It was the change of a nightmare, and that all should fit, fifty yards ahead of us a babbling brook barred our way. On the far side a velvet green ride, sprinkled with rabbits and fern, gently sloped upwards and away, but behind us was no hope. Forty horse-power would never have rolled wet pneumatic tyres up that verdurous cliff we had descended.

'H'm!' Our guest coughed significantly. 'A great many cars thinks they can take this road; but they all come back. We walks after 'em at our convenience.'

'Meanin' that the other jaunty is now pursuin' us on his lily feet?' said Pyecroft.

'*Pre*cisely.'

'An' you think,' said Pyecroft (I have no hope to render the scorn of the words), '*that'll* make any odds? Get out!'

The man obeyed with alacrity.

'See those spars up-ended over there? I mean that wickyup-thing. Hop-poles, then, you rural

blighter. Keep on fetching me hop-poles at the double.'

And he doubled, Pyecroft at his heels; for they had arrived at a perfect understanding.

There was a stack of hurdles a few yards down stream, laid aside after sheep-washing; and there were stepping-stones in the brook. Hinchcliffe rearranged these last to make some sort of causeway; I brought up the hurdles; and when Pyecroft and his subaltern had dropped a dozen hop-poles across the stream, laid them down over all.

'Talk o' the Agricultur'l Hall!' he said, mopping his brow—''tisn't in it with us. The approach to the bridge must now be paved with hurdles, owin' to the squashy nature o' the country. Yes, an' we'd better have one or two on the far side to lead her on to *terror fermior*. Now, Hinch! Give her full steam and 'op along. If she slips off, we're done. Shall I take the wheel?'

'No. This is my job,' said the first-class engine-room artificer. 'Get over the far side, and be ready to catch her if she jibs on the uphill.'

We crossed that elastic structure and stood ready amid the bracken. Hinchcliffe gave her a full steam and she came like a destroyer on her trial. There was a crack, a flicker of white water, and she was in our arms fifty yards up the slope;

or rather, we were behind her pushing her madly towards a patch of raw gravel whereon her wheels could bite. Of the bridge remained only a few wildly vibrating hop-poles, and those hurdles which had been sunk in the mud of the approaches.

'She—she kicked out all the loose ones behind her, as she finished with 'em,' Hinchcliffe panted.

'At the Agricultural Hall they would 'ave been fastened down with ribbons,' said Pyecroft. 'But this ain't Olympia.'

'She nearly wrenched the tiller out of my hand. Don't you think I conned her like a cock-angel, Pye?'

'*I* never saw anything like it,' said our guest propitiatingly. 'And now, gentlemen, if you'll let me go back to Linghurst, I promise you you won't hear another word from me.'

'Get in,' said Pyecroft, as we puffed out on to a metalled road once more. 'We 'aven't begun on *you* yet.'

'A joke's a joke,' he replied. 'I don't mind a little bit of a joke myself, but this is going beyond it.'

'Miles an' miles beyond it, if this machine stands up. We'll want water pretty soon.'

Our guest's countenance brightened, and Pyecroft perceived it.

'Let me tell you,' he said earnestly, 'I won't

make any difference to you whatever happens. Barrin' a dhow or two Tajurrah-way, prizes are scarce in the Navy. Hence we never abandon 'em.'

There was a long silence. Pyecroft broke it suddenly.

'Robert,' he said, 'have you a mother?'

'Yes.'

'Have you a big brother?'

'Yes.'

'An' a little sister?'

'Yes.'

'Robert. Does your mamma keep a dog?'

'Yes. Why?'

'All right, Robert. I won't forget it.'

I looked for an explanation.

'I saw his cabinet photograph in full uniform on the mantelpiece o' that cottage before faithful Fido turned up,' Pyecroft whispered. 'Ain't you glad it's all in the family somehow?'

We filled with water at a cottage on the edge of St. Leonard's Forest, and, despite our increasing leakage, made shift to climb the ridge above Instead Wick. Knowing the car as I did, I felt sure that final collapse would not be long delayed. My sole concern was to run our guest well into the wilderness before that came.

On the roof of the world—a naked plateau

clothed with young heather—she retired from active life in floods of tears. Her feed-water-heater (Hinchcliffe blessed it and its maker for three minutes) was leaking beyond hope of repair; she had shifted most of her packing, and her water-pump would not lift.

'If I had a bit of piping I could disconnect this tin cartridge-case an' feed direct into the boiler. It 'ud knock down her speed, but we could get on,' said he, and looked hopelessly at the long dun ridges that hove us above the panorama of Sussex. Northward we could see the London haze. Southward, between gaps of the whale-backed Downs, lay the Channel's zinc-blue. But all our available population in that vast survey was one cow and a kestrel.

'It's down hill to Instead Wick. We can run her there by gravity,' I said at last.

'Then he'll only have to walk to the station to get home. Unless we take off 'is boots first,' Pyecroft replied.

'That,' said our guest earnestly, 'would be theft atop of assault and very serious.'

'Oh, let's hang him an' be done,' Hinchcliffe grunted. 'It's evidently what he's sufferin' for.'

Somehow murder did not appeal to us that warm noon. We sat down to smoke in the heather, and presently out of the valley below

came the thick beat of a petrol-motor ascending. I paid little attention to it till I heard the roar of a horn that has no duplicate in all the Home Counties.

'That's the man I was going to lunch with!' I cried. 'Hold on!' and I ran down the road.

It was a big, black, black-dashed, tonneaued twenty-four-horse Octopod; and it bore not only Kysh my friend, and Salmon his engineer, but my own man, who for the first time in our acquaintance smiled.

'Did they get you? What did you get? I was coming into Linghurst as witness to character—your man told me what happened—but I was stopped near Instead Wick myself,' cried Kysh.

'What for?'

'Leaving car unattended. An infernal swindle, when you think of the loose carts outside every pub in the county. I was jawing with the police for an hour, but it's no use. They've got it all their own way, and we're helpless.'

Hereupon I told him my tale, and for proof, as we topped the hill, pointed out the little group round my car.

All supreme emotion is dumb. Kysh put on the brake and hugged me to his bosom till I groaned. Then, as I remember, he crooned like a mother returned to her suckling.

'Divine! Divine!' he murmured. 'Command me.'

'Take charge of the situation,' I said. 'You'll find a Mr. Pyecroft on the quarter-deck. I'm altogether out of it.'

'He shall stay there. Who am I but the instrument of vengeance in the hands of an overruling Providence? (And I put in fresh sparking-plugs this morning.) Salmon, take that steam-kettle home, somehow. I would be alone.'

'Leggat,' I said to my man, 'help Salmon home with my car.'

'Home? Now? It's hard. It's cruel hard,' said Leggat, almost with a sob.

Hinchcliffe outlined my car's condition briefly to the two engineers. Mr. Pyecroft clung to our guest, who stared with affrighted eyes at the palpitating Octopod; and the free wind of high Sussex whimpered across the ling.

'I am quite agreeable to walkin' 'ome all the way on my feet,' said our guest. 'I wouldn't go to any railway station. It 'ud be just the proper finish to our little joke.' He laughed nervously.

'What's the evolution?' said Pyecroft. 'Do we turn over to the new cruiser?'

I nodded, and he escorted our guest to the

tonneau with care. When I was in, he sat himself broad-armed on the little flap-seat which controls the door. Hinchcliffe sat by Kysh.

'You drive?' Kysh asked, with the smile that has won him his chequered way through the world.

'Steam only, and I've about had my whack for to-day, thanks.'

'I see.'

The long, low car slid forward and then dropped like a bullet down the descent our steam toy had so painfully climbed. Our guest's face blanched, and he clutched the back of the tonneau.

'New commander's evidently been trained on a destroyer,' said Hinchcliffe.

'What's 'is wonderful name?' whispered Pyecroft. 'Ho! Well, I'm glad it ain't Saul we've run up against — nor Nimshi, for that matter. This is makin' me feel religious.'

Our impetus carried us half-way up the next slope, where we steadied to a resonant fifteen an hour against the collar.

'What do you think?' I called to Hinchcliffe.

''Taint as sweet as steam, o' course; but for power it's twice the *Furious* against half the *Jaseur* in a head-sea.'

Volumes could not have touched it more

exactly. His bright eyes were glued on Kysh's hands juggling with levers behind the discreet backward sloping dash.

'An' what sort of a brake might you use?' he said politely.

'This,' Kysh replied, as the last of the hill shot up to one in eight. He let the car run back a few feet and caught her deftly on the brake, repeating the performance cup and ball fashion. It was like being daped above the Pit at the end of an uncoiled solar plexus. Even Pyecroft held his breath.

'It ain't fair! It ain't fair!' our guest moaned. 'You're makin' me sick.'

'What an ungrateful blighter he is!' said Pyecroft. 'Money couldn't buy you a run like this. . . . Do it well overboard!'

'We'll just trundle up the Forest and drop into the Park Row, I think,' said Kysh. 'There's a bit of good going hereabouts.'

He flung a careless knee over the low raking tiller that the ordinary expert puts under his armpit, and down four miles of yellow road, cut through barren waste, the Octopod sang like a six-inch shell.

'Whew! But you know your job,' said Hinchcliffe. 'You're wasted here. I'd give something to have you in my engine-room.'

'He's steering with 'is little hind-legs,' said Pyecroft. 'Stand up and look at him, Robert. You'll never see such a sight again!'

'Nor don't want to,' was our guest's reply. 'Five 'undred pounds wouldn't begin to cover 'is fines even since I've been with him.'

Park Row is reached by one hill which drops three hundred feet in half a mile. Kysh had the thought to steer with his hand down the abyss, but the manner in which he took the curved bridge at the bottom brought my few remaining hairs much nearer the grave.

'We're in Surrey now; better look out,' I said.

'Never mind. I'll roll her into Kent for a bit. We've lots of time; it's only three o'clock.'

'Won't you want to fill your bunkers, or take water, or oil her up?' said Hinchcliffe.

'We don't use water, and she's good for two hundred on one tank o' petrol if she doesn't break down.'

'Two hundred miles from 'ome and mother *and* faithful Fido to-night, Robert,' said Pyecroft, slapping our guest on the knee. 'Cheer up! Why, I've known a destroyer do less.'

We passed with some decency through some towns, till by way of the Hastings road we whirled into Cramberhurst, which is a deep pit.

'Now,' said Kysh, 'we begin.'

'Previous service not reckoned towards pension,' said Pyecroft. 'We are doin' you lavish, Robert.'

'But when's this silly game to finish, any'ow?' our guest snarled.

'Don't worry about the *when* of it, Robert. The *where's* the interestin' point for you just now.'

I had seen Kysh drive before, and I thought I knew the Octopod, but that afternoon he and she were exalted beyond my knowledge. He improvised on the keys—the snapping levers and quivering accelerators—marvellous variations, so that our progress was sometimes a fugue and sometimes a barn-dance, varied on open greens by the weaving of fairy rings. When I protested, all that he would say was: 'I'll hypnotise the fowl! I'll dazzle the rooster!' or other words equally futile. And she—oh! that I could do her justice!—she turned her broad black bows to the westering light, and lifted us high upon hills that we might see and rejoice with her. She whooped into veiled hollows of elm and Sussex oak; she devoured infinite perspectives of park palings; she surged through forgotten hamlets, whose single streets gave back, reduplicated, the clatter of her exhaust, and, tireless, she repeated the motions. Over naked uplands

she droned like a homing bee, her shadow lengthening in the sun that she chased to his lair. She nosed up unparochial byways and accommodation-roads of the least accommodation, and put old scarred turf or new-raised molehills under her most marvellous springs with never a jar. And since the King's highway is used for every purpose save traffic, in mid-career she stepped aside for, or flung amazing loops about, the brainless driver, the driverless horse, the drunken carrier, the engaged couple, the female student of the bicycle and her staggering instructor, the pig, the perambulator, and the infant school (where it disembogued yelping on cross-roads), with the grace of Nellie Farren (upon whom be the Peace) and the lithe abandon of all the Vokes family. But at heart she was ever Judic as I remember that Judic long ago —Judic clad in bourgeois black from wrist to ankle, achieving incredible improprieties.

We were silent — Hinchcliffe and Pyecroft through professional appreciation; I with a layman's delight in the expert; and our guest because of fear.

At the edge of the evening she smelt the sea to southward and sheered thither like the strong-winged albatross, to circle enormously amid green flats fringed by martello towers.

'Ain't that Eastbourne yonder?' said our guest,

reviving. 'I've a aunt there—she's cook to a J.P. —could identify me.'

'Don't worry her for a little thing like that,' said Pyecroft; and ere he had ceased to praise family love, our unpaid judiciary, and domestic service, the Downs rose between us and the sea, and the Long Man of Hillingdon lay out upon the turf.

'Trevington—up yonder—is a fairly isolated little dorp,' I said, for I was beginning to feel hungry.

'No,' said Kysh. 'He'd get a lift to the railway in no time. . . . Besides, I'm enjoying myself. . . . Three pounds eighteen and sixpence. Infernal swindle!'

I take it one of his more recent fines was rankling in Kysh's brain; but he drove like the Archangel of the Twilight.

About the longitude of Cassocks, Hinchcliffe yawned. 'Aren't we ever goin' to maroon our Robert? I'm hungry, too.'

'The commodore wants his money back,' I answered.

'If he drives like this habitual, there must be a tidyish little lump owin' to him,' said Pyecroft. 'Well, I'm agreeable.'

'I didn't know it could be done. S'welp me, I didn't,' our guest murmured.

'But you will,' said Kysh. And that was the first and last time he addressed the man.

We ran through Penfield Green, half stupefied with open air, drugged with the relentless boom of the Octopod, and extinct with famine.

'I used to shoot about here,' said Kysh, a few miles farther on. 'Open that gate, please,' and he slowed as the sun touched the sky-line. At this point we left metalled roads and bucked vigorously amid ditches and under trees for twenty minutes.

'Only cross-country car on the market,' he said, as we wheeled into a straw-yard where a lone bull bellowed defiance to our growlings. 'Open that gate, please. I hope the cattle-bridge will stand up.'

'I've took a few risks in my time,' said Pyecroft as timbers cracked beneath us and we entered between thickets, 'but I'm a babe to this man, Hinch.'

'Don't talk to me. Watch *him*! It's a liberal education, as Shakespeare says. Fallen tree on the port bow, Sir.'

'Right! That's my mark. Sit tight!'

She flung up her tail like a sounding whale and buried us in a fifteen-foot deep bridle-path buttressed with the exposed roots of enormous beeches. The wheels leaped from root to rounded

boulder, and it was very dark in the shadow of the foliage.

'There ought to be a hammer-pond somewhere about here.' Kysh was letting her down this chute in brakeful spasms.

'Water dead ahead, Sir. Stack o' brushwood on the starboard beam, and — no road,' sang Pyecroft.

'Cr-r-ri-key!' said Hinchcliffe, as the car on a wild cant to the left went astern, screwing herself round the angle of a track that overhung the pond. 'If she only had two propellers, I believe she'd talk poetry. She can do everything else.'

'We're rather on our port wheels now,' said Kysh; 'but I don't think she'll capsize. This road isn't used much by motors.'

'You don't say so,' said Pyecroft. 'What a pity!'

She bored through a mass of crackling brushwood, and emerged into an upward-sloping fern-glade fenced with woods so virgin, so untouched, that William Rufus might have ridden off as we entered. We climbed out of the violet-purple shadows towards the upland where the last of the day lingered. I was filled to my moist eyes with the almost sacred beauty of sense and association that clad the landscape.

'Does 'unger produce 'alluciations?' said Pye-

croft in a whisper. 'Because I've just seen a sacred ibis walkin' arm in arm with a British cock-pheasant.'

'What are you panickin' at?' said Hinchcliffe. 'I've been seein' zebra for the last two minutes, but *I* 'aven't complained.'

He pointed behind us, and I beheld a superb painted zebra (Burchell's, I think), following our track with palpitating nostrils. The car stopped, and it fled away.

There was a little pond in front of us from which rose a dome of irregular sticks crowned with a blunt-muzzled beast that sat upon its haunches.

'Is it catching?' said Pyecroft.

'Yes. I'm seeing beaver,' I replied.

'It is here!' said Kysh, with the air and gesture of Captain Nemo, and half turned.

'No—no—no! For 'Eaven's sake—not 'ere!' Our guest gasped like a sea-bathed child, as four efficient hands swung him far out-board on to the turf. The car ran back noiselessly down the slope.

'Look! Look! It's sorcery!' cried Hinchcliffe.

There was a report like a pistol-shot as the beaver dived from the roof of his lodge, but we watched our guest. He was on his knees, praying

to kangaroos. Yea, in his bowler hat he kneeled before kangaroos — gigantic, erect, silhouetted against the light — four buck-kangaroos in the heart of Sussex!

And we retrogressed over the velvet grass till our hind-wheels struck well-rolled gravel, leading us to sanity, main roads, and, half an hour later, the 'Grapnel Inn' at Horsham.

. . . . .

After a great meal we poured libations and made burnt-offerings in honour of Kysh, who received our homage graciously, and, by the way, explained a few things in the natural history line that had puzzled us. England is a most marvellous country, but one is not, till one knows the eccentricities of large landowners, trained to accept kangaroos, zebras, or beavers as part of its landscape.

When we went to bed Pyecroft pressed my hand, his voice thick with emotion.

'We owe it to you,' he said. 'We owe it all to you. Didn't I say we never met in *pup-pup-puris naturalibus*, if I may so put it, without a remarkably hectic day ahead of us?'

'That's all right,' I said. 'Mind the candle.' He was tracing smoke-patterns on the wall.

'But what I want to know is whether we'll

succeed in acclimatisin' the blighter, or whether Sir William Gardner's keepers 'll kill 'im before 'e gets accustomed to 'is surroundin's?'

Some day, I think, we must go up the Linghurst Road and find out.

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